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Girls' access to education and literacy in developing countries has received international significance in the past decade. This dissertation uses a qualitative approach in understanding girls' literacy in rural Pakistan. It contributes in (1) addressing issues of literacy and school enrollment through literacy dimensions, (2) identifying socio-cultural norms that affect girls' literacy, (3) understanding girls' home and school practices, and (4) critical literacy curriculum design and implementation. The documentary highlights the work during the pilot study. A total of forty girls' and women's narratives were collected to understand socio-cultural practices and girls' curricular needs. Nineteen other participants were interviewed: educational, political and religious leaders, fathers, and teachers. The analysis indicates importance of understanding literacy dimensions, including social and cultural norms that hinder a girl's access to education. Further, these norms are reiterated in a girl's life as shown through girls' family and school literacy practices. Critical literacy design using Freirean and feminist pedagogies integrated with Islamic principles show its positive impact on girls through its implementation. The findings have practical implications for educational leaders and policy makers that may potentially benefit them in increasing literacy and school enrollment among rural citizens, in particular that comprise sixty-eight percent of Pakistan's population.

A MULTI-METHOD QUALITATIVE INQUIRY OF GIRLS' ACCESS TO
EDUCATION AND LITERACY THROUGH THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF A CRITICAL
LITERACY CURRICULUM IN
RURAL PAKISTAN

by
Amna Latif

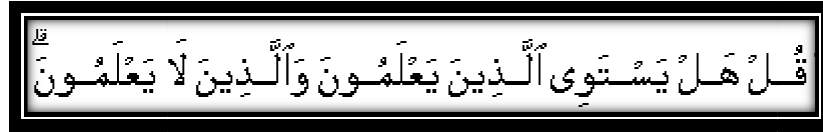
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Dr. Leila Villaverde
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Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?" (Quran, 39:9)

To
My children

Maryam, Fatima, and Ahmad

Your support, patience, and love during my doctoral program is very much appreciated. I hope this will inspire you to always seek and acquire knowledge

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of
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CHAPTER I

SETTING THE CONTEXT

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has since its inception in 1947 faced a challenge in addressing the needs of its citizens especially in terms of providing quality of life-- education, health and nutrition, economic and political stability, and a socio-cultural environment that makes life meaningful to its citizens. Pakistan has a population of 167 million spread over four provinces/states, 67.5% in rural areas while 32.5% in urban areas.

Even after struggling for improvement in quality of education especially in the public sector evidenced through educational policies, five-year education plans, and partnership with international agencies, the literacy rate of Pakistan remains stagnant at 49.9%, one of the lowest in the world and South Asia. Pakistan's female literacy rate of 35.2% drops to 25% in rural areas with enrollment dropping from 55% to 20% from Grade 1 to Grade 6.

Pakistan also faces the issue of low school enrollment for both genders particularly in rural areas making it even more difficult to increase literacy among school aged children. According to the National Plan of Action 2001-2010, the primary school age group (5-10 years) population was approximately 18 million in 2000, of which 9.3 million were boys and 8.6 million were girls.

Net enrollment at primary level is approximately 12 million (66% of the total population), of which 7.6 million are boys (82% of total boy population between age 5-10) and 4.8 millions are girls (55% of total girls population between age 5-10). (National Plan of Action, 2001; Education Census, 2005). Girls' enrollment drops to 50% in Grade 5 and 90% in Grade 12 compared to that in Grade 1 (Education Census, 2005). Major causes and factors for low enrollment identified in the National Plan of Action (2001) include: (1) long distance from school and lack of physical facilities in schools, (2) low quality textbooks and lack of relevant curriculum to the needs of the students, (3) lack of qualified women teachers, (4) teacher student ration 48:1, (5) gender disparities and bias in curriculum and textbooks, (6) pervasive poverty in society, (7) parent's lack of understanding of the value/benefits of education, and (8) high opportunity cost of sending children to school as they can help at work and home.

Aftab (1994) concluded that low girls' enrollment is mainly attributed to the social perception of women in rural environment. In addition parent's poverty deprives more girls than boys of education in the same family. The study was conducted in ten low income localities of Karachi and collected data from approximately 1000 households and 8357 people. Fifty percent of the survey population was between the age group of one and fourteen years. Approximately thirty-seven percent of the men received education while only eleven percent of women received education. Of the 500 illiterate girls, 96.2 could not identify the alphabet while only 3.8 percent could read and none could write. Furthermore, 75.6 percent of these girls had never attended any school. The major causes provided for no or low girls' education were poverty, against family norms and traditions,

father's opposition, girls' own lack of interest, distance of the school, and household work. Those who did attend school identified financial reasons, loss of interest, and parents' unwillingness as key factors for dropping out.

The survey results mentioned above only reflect a small picture of the issues faced by Pakistan. It is interesting to observe that the survey was conducted in the largest city of Pakistan, Karachi which has an estimated population of 18 million. The effects of illiteracy and access to education become more acute in the interior and rural areas of the country.

Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies (CIET) conducted studies in four provinces of Pakistan in 1996-97 to identify causes of the gender gap in primary education and proposing cost-effective action for reducing this in local communities. According to CIET (1996), less than half of the girls enroll in primary schools in Pakistan as compared to 80 percent of the boys who enroll. The following factors were found to be significant contributors in gender and enrollment gap: (1) Mother's education, (2) parents' satisfaction with their child's teacher, (3) Cost of education, (4) Not getting help in homework contributed to high dropout rates among girls, (5) availability of resources such as free drinking water and toilets/latrines, (6) attitude of religious leaders regarding girls' education especially in rural areas.

The Pakistani mindset of what girls will do if they are educated deprives more than 60% of Pakistani girls to attend schools. The chance of receiving education becomes even lower in rural areas of Pakistan where as the above study indicated it is hard to find mothers who are educated. Male figure is always considered as the head of the household

and the “sole” decision maker for the family. I truly believe that a mother who is educated can continue the process of learning with her children, realize the benefits of education for her family, and perhaps run the household “effectively”.

I chose to study girls’ education because I feel that education is a key element in the empowerment of girls and women especially those in rural areas. Through my own experiences of being a woman in Pakistan, I think that by educating girls, they become aware of their rights, responsibilities, and can contribute significantly towards the growth and prosperity of their families and community. In addition a curriculum that links students’ experiences to learning at school will help girls to become more critically informed about the society. At a broader level and context, I feel that education of women leads to an increased effort to prosper democracy, political participation, and economic growth especially in terms of productive farming and higher wages. My study allows girls and women to reflect upon the greater and more pertinent social structure in the Pakistani society, an awareness of their role and status, and an effort to allow for social change within individuals. This will lead to social reform and change in the political economy, as well as a sense of inquiry at the individual level. Freire (2000) explains this concept as follows:

Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of the world. (p. 34)

The feudal culture dominates in rural areas of Pakistan promotes illiteracy and violates basic human rights. Much like its neighbor India where 1 million female fetuses are aborted every year so that families are able to secure male heirs (Goodwin, 2002), Pakistan focuses on strengthening son preference thus lending a hand to patriarchy and male domination in the country (Miller, 2001). Some of the women in rural areas are buried alive, sold, raped or jailed when families are unable to pay for blood money, are given in marriage against their will to compensate for crimes committed by family members, and are denied the right of inheritance because parents provide them dowry and gifts on marriage . If they claim their right to inheritance, they are either killed or are abandoned for the rest of their life. We fail to realize the norms, traditions, and customs prevalent in the country deprive a woman of empowerment, autonomy, and literacy. Furthermore, these make her vulnerable and doomed for oppression, violence, poverty, deprivation, and segregation.

Pakistan's labor force is based on agriculture 42%, industry 20%, and services 38%. (CIA, n.d.) Agriculture provides the main source for Pakistan's export earnings. Pakistan's agriculture sector is densely populated with women occupying 79 percent of the labor force as compared to 57.3 percent men (Bar & Pal, 2000). In the urban sector, majority of the women are employed in low-paying jobs with at least 45% employed as civil servant on basic pay scale grade 9 (Bari & Pal, 2000). The highest pay scale grade in Pakistan is 22 and only two women are employed on that grade as the heads of higher education institutes.

Purpose of Study

My quest for girls' education and literacy in Pakistan sprouted in my curriculum class project when I designed a transformative literacy curriculum for girls. As I browsed for relevant articles and books, I was only able to find "official versions" of how literacy was defined by organizations outside the country and how those organizations were intruding the space of local citizens by trying to implement an effective, civilized, and Westernized way of educating the youth in the country. I read several incidents where teachers were boycotting the government and the international agencies for telling them what to do and how to make the system of schooling better. The more I browsed, the more I became interested and passionate about the topic. After my class project, I often thought about ways to continue with the topic in other aspects. I applied for research funds and was fortunately granted some financial support through which I returned to Pakistan for a pilot study on the transformative curriculum I had proposed and designed. The word "transformative" pushed my thinking to deeper levels.....is it transformative because it is a western approach to making things better for the "uneducated", "uncivilized savage" living in the remotest part of world where presumably nothing exists except deserts, and some vegetation? I continue to struggle with this concept in my study. Am I really going to convey something useful and meaningful to girls and women in rural areas or is it my own imagination and privilege that I see playing its role out in such a way? What about the definition of literacy?.....does it only imply to read and write, another mainstream approach, does the knowledge and reading of the Quran (Holy Scripture for Muslims in Arabic language) not constitute literacy...why was the

government not considering that as an aspect of literacy for girls and women? What about informal ways of learning at home and the way girls and women make meaning out of their lives? What about the gender roles girls witnessed being enacted at home that formed the very basis of their identity in the society? What about the stories that grandparents narrated in the homes of these girls? Are all these not considered forms of literacy that provide the very meaning to the context of people's lives and those around them? What about the social gatherings or circles of men and women in the evenings? Why was the government defining literacy so narrowly.....to get billions of dollars from international organizations to invest in the education of girls that does not penetrate down to the grass root levels making the literacy rate lower than it was before and now declaring that even in 2015 (the goal set by United Nations for providing education for all), 52 million people of Pakistan will still be illiterate (UNESCO, 2008). No one can question the practices of feudal lords, and the government especially in the case of girls not attending schools or not providing schools for girls after a certain grade (usually eighth).

Returning to Pakistan for the pilot study in the summer of 2007 generated excitement as well as fears, apprehensions, and reservations of doing something that nobody had attempted to do in the area before. I questioned my own role in this study....yes I was privileged. I was born and raised in an affluent society in Karachi, home to at least 10 million people with different racial, culture, and religious values. I attended a Catholic school, never felt or even saw what it looked like to work in farmlands or severe conditions with no food and water. Having married a person from a

city in the central part of Punjab with relatives who still lived and worked on farmlands, I only saw a glimpse of it when I visited the village once in several months. Sitting with them in the open kitchen area where the smell and smoke of the kiln would make my eyes water and difficult to breathe, I wondered how they could bear to sit and cook for at least three times a day and still work in the farms under scorching heat, bare footed with no shade to rest when they felt tired or weary. Drinking fresh milk from the cows and sitting in the open air on *charpais* (wooden rope bed) with only one faint light bulb at a distant made me wonder at the simplicity with which life existed here. I deeply thought about how difficult and complicated we had made life for ourselves trying to find an identity and feeling the pressures of patriarchy. I did observe the hegemonic interactions between men and women and the ways in which young girls and boys learned the power relations, differences between the genders, and the identity they would attain in the society. I wondered what my husband's relatives thought about me. A middle-class, educated, urban woman who does not understand their regional language, yet pretends to sit beside them for a few hours nodding her head at questions they asked.

I had always felt uncomfortable during my interaction with my husband's relatives in the village and found ways to navigate my own identity. I wanted to make a difference in their lives through education because it had served me so well. To some my ideas about providing girls access to education was radical, to others it was risky, while only for a handful, it made a little sense in making an effort for girls in the village. I believe that any change in a society, at an individual level as well as at a local and national level can be made by providing its people access to education. Education paves

the way for people to understand who they are, can question the societal conditions, their role in the society, and social construction of gender, what and how they get their knowledge.

Goals of Study

The goal of the dissertation study is to gain a deeper understanding of the factors and dimensions that impact literacy. In so doing, my aim is to understand these factors in relation to social and cultural norms/traditions that exist in the village such as women's role in society, affects of colonialism, and girls' identity formation. In addition, the study also addresses how different forms of literacy are learned and adapted in girls' lives, where they gain their knowledge from and how it is manifested in their practices. I use literacy as a complex cultural and social process needed to transform a society and create awareness that is neither content nor context free, but one that is always filtered through the culture. Based upon the premises of Freire's critical literacy pedagogy and feminist pedagogy integrated with Islamic teachings, values, and women's rights, the study also designs and implements literacy curriculum guidelines to potentially help educational leaders and local governmental agencies in resolving the issues of enrollment and literacy in the area. Here I use critical in the sense of making the girls conscious about their role and issues in the society while allowing them freedom to question and critically think about how and what they are taught in schools and at home. This study not only helps the research site but may also serve to potentially incorporate curriculum for other similar sites and rural areas in Pakistan and to achieve the United Nations Millennium goal of providing quality education to children by 2015.

Research Questions

Political and economic situations have changed over the decade in Pakistan with very little hope in the near future for the citizens particularly related to education.

Government of Pakistan spends less than 2.5% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education with girls' education and literacy being the most neglected (Shah 2003;

Kronstadt 2004; Farah 2007). The research questions include:

1. How can educational leaders address the issues of low girls' literacy and enrollment in Pakistan's rural areas?
 - a. What are some of the socio-cultural norms that hinder a girls' access to education?
 - b. What are the different forms of literacy learned and adapted in girls' lives?
2. What is the impact of a critical literacy curriculum integrated with Islamic teachings on girls in rural areas of Pakistan?
 - a. How do girls experience religion in comparison with culture?

Religious interpretations vary in rural areas, in most cases; scholars present a conservative and bleak picture of Islam, particularly one that oppresses women. I aim to provide students with a different, yet welcoming and liberating perspective of Islam.

Subjectivity and Positionality as a Researcher

From a feminist standpoint, I question my own privilege of having access to elite but not necessarily "quality" education both in and outside Pakistan. Keeping up with the

Islamic values of education and women's rights, I was provided the "best" in education at all times. My father grew up in India, attended a private Catholic school, and experienced two migrations, one from India to Bangladesh in 1947 and second from Bangladesh to Pakistan in 1971. He lost his father when he was 15 and bore the responsibility of taking care of his mother and siblings. He was a prisoner of war during 1970 and swam across the river to survive. Suffering from injuries of alienation and loneliness; he chose the route of education and caring for special children for providing him patience and tolerance to deal with himself and his family. He could only find hope in cultivating the mind and creating a path for his wife and children through seeking and producing knowledge. My mother joined the teaching profession soon afterwards and both my parents devoted all their efforts towards our education in the best way they thought possible for us. My siblings and I attended a private Catholic school and later proceeded to prestigious institutions for higher education. My parents have been proud of their accomplishment: my sister a medical doctor, me pursuing my doctorate, my brother an IT Specialist, and my youngest brother recently graduated from high school with several gold medals. This breadth of knowledge my father says is the only thing he and my mother could give us instead of the material things. While growing up I would always hear people comment on why my parents had not invested in a house or bigger cars and why they had not put up to the traditions and culture. What people perhaps did not realize was the immense knowledge, be it mainstream, that my parents, being deprived of it themselves, had helped us gain over the years. I often remember my mother saying that she wanted to become a medical doctor and even got herself admitted but no one was

willing to pay her fees and or even help her fulfill her dreams. So, she wanted us to accomplish our goals and dreams. She and my father worked hard to make us stand on our feet and be what we are today. The costs of education are a burden for every parent, yet my parents struggled to make both ends meet and today they are happy and proud that they were able to that for their children.

Following the customs and traditions in Pakistan for women, I was prepared to halt studies after my marriage. The financial and emotional encouragement and support of my husband came as a surprise when he spent all his savings on my education. I belong to the middle class and was afforded the luxury of being educated while most of the women in my country are not. I am the first woman in my family and my husband's family to pursue a doctorate and to have the courage to study after marriage. I am fortunate, yet extremely privileged in comparison to hundreds and thousands of girls who do not get a chance to attend school and feel what it is like to read or write. I did not have to work in severe conditions, in fact I always had at least a room with a ceiling and fan to sleep, luxuries scarcely found in rural Pakistan.

Girls, especially, in rural areas get married as soon as they attain the age of puberty or a little later. They are considered a burden for the family and are sometimes not even contacted after they are married. I studied after my marriage, yet another form of privilege. A woman has no life other than that associated with her household after marriage. The expectations from girls after their marriage are usually to maintain their marriage, be submissive, and take care of the household. There are never any

expectations for her to get educated, seek ways to help her learn, or pave a path where she can benefit her children through her own learning.

Now when I feel it important to address the same issue of access to education for those in rural areas, I am not only challenged but am afraid of all the risks involved in conducting my research.

It is clear and apparent that my own perspectives--privilege, education, middle-class, feminist standpoint affect my role as a researcher in the study. Listening and understanding women and girls who belong to the working class and farming community, whose thinking is set in ways that are patriarchal and hegemonic, and who have not been “schooled” and considered uneducated by governmental standards would be a struggle and challenge for me.

Arrangement of Study

Chapter 2 explores education in Pakistan in terms of educational policies, traditions of schooling, methods of teaching, low enrollment issues, and achievement scores. Chapter 3 provides an understanding of social, cultural, political, and religious issues that affect education in Pakistan. Chapter 4 looks deeper into the history of female education in Pakistan, literacy policies and initiatives by the government and international agencies, issues of girls’ education and literacy in Pakistan, and finally lays the theoretical framework for the literacy curriculum guidelines. Chapter 5 relates to the research design and strategies for data collection and analysis. Chapter 6 presents the interpretation of my data and findings, the implementation and impact of the literacy curriculum on girls in the school and the role of educational leaders in addressing the

issues of literacy in Pakistan. Finally, in Chapter 7, I conclude my dissertation with a summary of the study, contribution of the study, implications of the study, future research, and trustworthiness of my study.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Millions of children across the developing countries face problems concerning literacy especially in terms of access to primary education. This urgent crisis is particularly severe in rural and poverty stricken areas of South-East Asia, the Middle-East, and sub-Saharan Africa, requiring immediate assistance and educational support. According to Herz and Sperling (2004) 104 million children between the ages of 6 and 11 do not attend school every year; 60 million of these children are girls. In addition 150 million children who are enrolled in schools drop out before they are able to complete primary education (fifth grade); 100 million of these children are girls. Thus providing quality basic education remains the single most important factor for at least 180 developing countries in the world who have committed to address this issue by pledging that every boy and girl receive quality basic education by 2015. This endeavor is endorsed by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Primary basic education remained a high priority at least in official statements and constitutions since Pakistan's independence in 1947. However even today, Pakistan's literacy rate (for population aged 15 years and above) remains stagnant at 49.9% (64% for men and 36% for women) being the one of lowest in the world and much below the South Asian average of 65%.

Since then, in order, to achieve 100% enrollment for school aged children, the Government of Pakistan is working with several international agencies such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Research Triangle Institute (RTI) to accomplish the target of providing free and basic quality education by 2015 by signing and endorsing the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals.

In order to propose reforms for improvement of education in the country in general and in the rural government/public schools in particular, there is a need to study the history and traditions of education in Pakistan, educational policies, the structure of education in Pakistan, and the different forms of parallel educational systems currently present in Pakistan.

Educational Policies

Education was not the main concern of policy makers and politicians during the early years of Pakistan's independence due to the bloodshed on both borders (India and Pakistan) and exchange of Muslim and Hindu refugees. Military needs to protect and safeguard borders including some areas of Kashmir, setting up the government infrastructure including necessary resources to effectively run the country were some of the major issues that Pakistan faced after its independence. According to Rahman (2004), Pakistan's existence on the world map remained vulnerable and under threat many years after its independence from the sub-continent. Despite these challenges, government reports indicate that policy makers defined the infrastructure for education and to some extent the ideological basis of education in Pakistan in several meetings between

November 27 and December 1 1947. According to the Government of Pakistan proceedings (1947):

What should be the ideological basis of education? Whether the Islamic conception of universal brotherhood of man, social democracy and social justice should constitute this ideological basis-cultivation of democratic virtues, i.e. tolerance, self-help, self-sacrifice, human kindliness etc. and the consciousness of common citizenship as opposed to provincial exclusiveness.

Since Pakistan was claimed as an Islamic Republic, the government stressed upon providing education based upon the standards and teachings of Islam to some extent besides other secular subjects. However, it is important to note that the government has little if any interest in instilling the above stated ideological basis of social justice and democratic virtues in the educational system of Pakistan. The democratic values in its true sense and a consciousness for citizenship are something that still lack among Pakistanis because it seems to go against the very nature of bureaucracy and patriarchy. What has the government done in 65 years to address the educational needs of its citizens, using the same curriculum for at least 40 years with minor modifications? When I was in public high school (intermediate level), I was taught through the same textbooks that my teachers and mother had studied, sad to see that the world of information had remained stagnant for almost 30-40 years. Textbooks are the only written medium of knowledge for students especially in rural areas. What has the government done to increase the sources of knowledge production for the students and broaden their horizons to think creatively? What has the government done to equip students with the democratic virtues of social justice, self-sacrifice, and consciousness? These superficial policies have

been maintained and honored to some extent in all educational policies and five year plans since Pakistan's independence, thus protecting the interests of the elites, and creating citizens who support such policies, are trained, and later employed in subordinate positions in the government.

The initial educational infrastructure of Pakistan included the Advisory Board of Education, Inter-University Board, and The Council of Technical Education. Islamic Studies was made part of the curriculum such that the textbooks and syllabi were in compliance with Islamic teachings. Urdu language was made the national language in 1952 with only 5 percent of the Pakistanis (elite) speaking it (Imam, 2005). In essence this decision was made to maintain unity and provide a national identity especially amongst the ruling elite and conform to the British concept of nation with one national language. Of course it suited the interests of the government to make their operations inexpensive through the use of one language defying the common citizens of their right on their own regional languages.

Inevitably Urdu became a threat and a disuniting factor for the citizens of Pakistan, particularly those in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) because it did not address their multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. In addition, Muhammad Ali Jinnah's (first Governor General of Pakistan) vision of including English as a compulsory language in schools and universities for international communication was adopted by policy makers (Rahman, 2004). Thus, English was taught as a second language starting in sixth grade until recently when the Federal Ministry of Education in Pakistan has changed it to start in Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten. The government/public

schools are the only schools in Pakistan to be affected by these policies. The private elite schools, British system schools and armed forces schools use English as the medium of instruction to produce the ruling elite, with Urdu only as a second language. English is also the medium of instruction in colleges and universities where a public school student is expected to be English proficient only after being taught the language for four years as a second language. Perhaps the underlying purpose of English and Urdu as medium of instruction in the schools was to create disparity and inequality, which until today is a major cause of distinction between the working/poor class and the middle and upper classes in Pakistan. Further, it has been estimated that approximately three million students are studying in 10,000 English medium schools in Pakistan (Rahman, 2004). This, once again raises questions of inequality in terms of ethnic identities, cultures, languages, the English medium schools, the Urdu medium schools, and the vernacular medium schools.

In 1948, Pakistan became a signatory of United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights which stated primary education as the basic human right of all people (Mirza, 2003). "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory...." (United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article 26). Thus the government promised to provide five years of free Universal Primary Education to its children including girls in rural areas by 1967. Later, the 1973 constitution embodied the right and access to free and compulsory education for all school aged children, committing once again to the need of primary and basic education for all. "The state of

Pakistan shall... remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period” (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973). Due to the enrollment rate of 47.4% in 1979, the target of providing free basic education for all was reset to 1980 (Mirza, 2003).

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, President of Pakistan between 1971 and 1973 and later Prime Minister of Pakistan between 1973-1977, proposed a new educational policy that emphasized adult literacy and nationalized 3,334 private schools and colleges. Even though the policy was not much different from those proposed earlier, it did address some major issues affecting education in Pakistan including a salary raise for college lecturers and teachers. Bhutto focused on nationalizing institutes, thus during his reign approximately 1,828 schools, 346 madrassas, 155 colleges, and 5 technical institutions were nationalized (Rahman, 2004).

During the 1980s, President of Pakistan, Zia ul Haq placed strong emphasis on including Islamic values and Arabic in the curriculum and text books of schools. This led to the inclusion of more Quranic verses and Islamic teaching in all subject areas. According to the National Education Policy (1979) that was proposed during Zia’s reign, the aims of education were revised to include the following:

1. Loyalty and patriotism to Islam and Pakistan.
2. Maintenance of unity by developing a spiritual and ideological identity.
3. Create awareness about the universality of Islam and contribute to the welfare of Muslims and to the spread of Islam worldwide.

4. Produce citizens who are well aware of Pakistan formation, its movement, its ideologies, history, and culture, taking pride in its Islamic identity.
5. Be a true Muslim in character, conduct, and motivation as implied in the Quran and Sunnah (life of Prophet Muhammad).

Zia ul Haq has been known in the history of Pakistan as one who Islamized (inculcated Islamic principles and teachings) the constitution and policies of Pakistan, especially those related with education. Since then, the textbooks have embodied Islamic teachings with inscriptions of Quranic verses and sayings of Prophet Muhammad on the textbook page covers and back flaps besides those in the written text. General Musharraf in his time as President tried to secularize the textbooks to include only a few surahs (chapters) and verses, and align the content to western standards. The interpretations of Islam has varied from urban to rural areas where most people are illiterate and tend to “hear and believe” religious knowledge from religious scholars. The religious scholars and politicians tend to use Islam for their own purposes to impose restrictions, rights, and oppression in most cases on people in rural areas. At least through textbooks rural children were being taught verses with meaning that they could critically think about and discuss as has been taught by Prophet Muhammad. Arabic language is very rich and diverse. One word may have several meanings and interpretations, based upon the context of its usage. Teachers may use these and several like these to incorporate critical thinking skills in children. Today, this opportunity has been very limited to suit the needs of bureaucracy.

To address the needs of education in the nation during the time of Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, and Pervez Musharraf, the Federal Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan along with the state ministries and 600 partners from public, private, and international sector initiated a series of Education Sector Reforms (ESR) with projected cost of \$7.2 billion in 2001. The main goals of ESR included: (1) increasing the national literacy rate, (2) providing free universal education by increasing completion rates and reducing gender inequalities, (3) improving the quality of education through curriculum and assessment reform, and teacher training, (4) mainstreaming/‘westernizing’ madrassahs, (5) higher education sector, (6) public private partnership. These reforms led to the enactment of the National Education Policy 1998-2010 (1998), which states that illiteracy will be eradicated through formal and informal means by expansion of basic education through involvement of community. In addition, the policy committed to increasing the literacy rate to 70 percent by the end of 2010. This commitment by the government still remains a dream and seemingly unrealistic with only superficial attempts by government to increase the literacy rate. The efforts to increase literacy remains a challenge yet to be overcome by the government of Pakistan.

Even though the literacy rate has increased from 16% in 1951 to 49.9% percent in 2005, 52 million people of Pakistan will still be illiterate in 2015 (UNESCO, 2008). This implies that even though efforts are being made, these efforts are perhaps not penetrating down for actual and practical implementation in schools. In addition, these figures indicate that education is not considered as one of the threads in the multifaceted problems in the life of rural and urban people.

Traditions of Schooling

Structure of Government Schools

There are 271,791 private and public institutions in Pakistan with a total student enrollment of 33.38 million and a teaching staff of 1.357 million. The specific categories of institutes, their levels and number of those institutes can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Public and Private Educational Institutions (Education Census, 2005)

Level of Institution	No. of Institutions
Pre-Primary	1,081
Primary	122,349
Mosque	14,123
Elementary/Middle	38,449
Secondary/High	22,955
Higher-Secondary	2,135
Intermediate College	747
Degree College	1,135
General University	49
British System	281
Total	203,304
Technical/Professional	
Vocational/Polytechnic	3,059
Non-Formal Basic Education	4,831
Distance Education	32
Special Education	218
Denni Madaris	12,153
Others	2,870
Total Institutions	227,791

Appendix A illustrates the structure of the education system in Pakistan.

Elementary/middle schools cater to students in Kindergarten-Grade 5/Grade 8, high schools from Grade 5/Grade 8-Grade 10, intermediate colleges from Grade 11-12. The public schools are gender segregated from Grades 6-12, where as some private schools

especially those in rural areas are gender segregated while others are co-ed. Students in public or private schools that follow the government system take standardized exams in Grade 5, 8, 10, 11, and 12. Students receive a secondary school certificate/matriculation and a higher-secondary school certificate on successful completion of exams in Grade 10, and Grade 12. After receiving a higher-secondary school certificate students may specialize in any field in the universities or colleges for a Bachelor's degree (2 years in public universities/colleges, 3-4 years in private universities). It is worth noting that only 4% of Pakistanis obtain a college degree, whereas only 1.58% obtains a graduate degree as shown in Table 2 below. This further indicates only the privileged population in Pakistan (those whose parents can afford the education) is able to attend college and graduate school.

Table 2: Level of Education in Pakistan (Census, 2001)

Level of Institution	Percentage of Population
Pre-Primary	18.30
Primary	30.14
Elementary/Middle	20.89
Secondary/High/Matriculation	17.29
Higher-Secondary/Intermediate	6.56
Bachelor's/Undergraduate	4.38
Master's/Graduate	1.58
Others	0.44

As depicted in Table 3 below, Urdu is the medium of instruction in almost 68.3% of public institutions, followed by Sindhi (provincial/state language in Sindh province) in 15.5% of public institutions, and English in 10.4% of public institutions (Education

Census, 2005). In private institutions, 57.2% follow Urdu as the medium of instruction, while 28.2% follow English.

Table 3: Medium of Instruction in Pakistan (Census, 2001)

Medium of Instruction	No. of Institutions
Urdu	147,137
Sindhi	35,334
English	23,732
Pashto	12,024
Arabic	7,150
Punjabi	599
Balochi	84
Others	1,731
Total	227,791

Rahman (2004) quotes the Pakistan Integrated Household Survey (PIHS) conducted in 2001-2002 to explain the polarization of the public education system in Pakistan. The survey reports that amongst the poorest people who participated in the survey based upon their household income, only 27% were able to send their children to school, while amongst the richest, 56% were able to send their children to school. One indicator of the high cost of education is the medium of instruction in the schools. Since public schools have Urdu, Sindhi, or other vernacular languages, they are considered low in status, poor in imparting quality education, and thus require lesser costs for education. The English medium schools on the other hand are for the middle and upper class students and considered to be better in imparting quality education; thus charging exorbitant rates for educating the students. In his proposal on new educational policies in

1969, Air Marshal Nur Khan mentioned this socio-economic gap, inequality, and polarization by stating that almost a caste-like distinction exists between those who can freely express themselves in and those who cannot (New Educational Policy, 1969). According to Education Sector Reforms (2002), the public-private enrollment ratio will increase from 85:10 to 60:40 by 2010 indicating an increase in the gap of inequality between the elite and the working class fulfilling the interests of the government and political leaders.

Government/Public School System

There are a total of 151,744 public institutions in Pakistan (Education Census, 2005) enrolling approximately 21.258 million students and employing 0.724 million teachers. Public schools are segregated based on gender from elementary to high school level. A small percentage of intermediate colleges (Grades 11-12) and almost all universities provide co-education.

In a survey conducted by Rahman (2004) in 2002-2003 of 230 students and 100 teachers in public schools across Pakistan, he found that 41.3% of them did not report their father's income and 95.65% did not report their mother's income due to the stigma attached with poverty. The report also indicated that schools were very far from the residence of the students. Therefore, the students had to spend a considerable amount of time, money, and energy to get to school.

Availability of resources and conditions in public schools. The Education Census (2005) reported that 37.8% of the schools exist without a boundary wall, 32.3% have no drinking water, 56.4% do not have electricity, 40.5% have no latrines/restrooms,

and 6.8% are without a building. The non-availability of resources was mostly characteristic of the public schools in rural areas of Pakistan. In addition to the non-availability of basic necessities of life, the public school buildings are sparsely furnished and some do not have any seating arrangement so classes are either held outdoors or students sit on the ground in their classrooms (Rahman, 2004).

Teacher's salaries. Teacher's salaries range from Rs. 84,000 (\$1400) to Rs. 168,000 (\$2800) per year which is very low as compared to private schools, attract in those who fail to get better paying jobs. Thus these teachers are less experienced and trained, providing poor quality education to their students. Some teachers in girls schools while most teachers in boys schools carry canes and other equipment for imposing punishment on their students. With such poor conditions both at home and school and pressure to work, many students opt to drop out; resulting in 53% of the poorest students to drop out before completing the 6th grade.

Armed forces, cadet, and federal schools. Armed forces or cadet schools and federal schools come under the umbrella of government schools since they are funded through the government. There are approximately 745 of such schools and colleges in Pakistan with a total enrollment of 280,089 students with English as the medium of instruction (Education Statistics, 2005). The cost per student per year in cadet and federal government schools is approximately Rs. 4818. This cost is much higher compared to that in regular government schools. These schools are attended mostly by students whose parents serve in the military or belong to the upper class families in the area. There is a distinct difference in the types of facilities, teachers, and building allocation as compared

to those of a regular public school in an urban or rural area. The requirement of entry tests for such schools made the purpose of these schools seem fair and equitable for all school aged children. Students who could attain a certain percentage of “merit” were admitted to these schools. How could an entry test in English language with no consideration for the working or poor class students attending a public school have any provisions for admitting them? Even if those working class students passed the test somehow, would it be possible for them to survive in those schools? Would they not feel those class disparities upon being admitted to the school in the ways they would be treated due to the shoes they wear, the way they look [clean or dirty], what sort of school bag and lunch [if any] they carried, and how much money they brought to spend in the school cafeteria? Why has the government consistently since 1947 been providing such policies and measures to alienate and otherize the working class children and push them to a place of no return? Will these children even come out of that working class mindset and feel rejuvenated? Who is willing to go to the other end with them and help them survive? Must they continue to live and die in the same conditions they are born with? What opportunities have we created to help them overcome obstacles and be accepted as truly whole people with unique and creative minds? Through my dissertation and the curriculum I design and implement, I would like to continue creating meaningful learning opportunities for these students especially girls.

Private School System

There are a total of 76,047 private institutions in Pakistan (Education Census, 2005), enrolling approximately 12.121 million students and employing 0.633 million

teachers. As mentioned earlier, in these institutions, 57.2% follow Urdu as the medium of instruction, while 28.2% follow English. These private English medium schools in Pakistan have a history which dates back to the British rule. Rahman (2004) states that there were two kinds of elite schools in India during the time of the British: (1) Chiefs' Colleges or those meant for "hereditary aristocracy", and (2) European or English schools. These schools were used as tools for social and political reasons by the Englishmen and a way for Indian society to assimilate to Western culture. The main purpose of these schools was to produce ruling elites who were equipped with the British culture, norms, and values, and could promote the same in Indian society as well as support British rule in India. These schools were assumed to impart quality education including higher standard of instruction as compared to the public schools with efficient discipline; thus justifying their exorbitant costs for education.

Private English medium schools that were opened in the late 1800s in India were run mostly by missionaries and others still exist today in Pakistan's bigger cities. Some of these include St. Joseph's Convent, St. Patrick's, Jesus and Mary, Burn Hall and many more. In addition to these the elite in Pakistan have opened chains of schools in different cities of Pakistan charging more than Rs. 3000 per student/month only for tuition. The inclusion of books, stationery, uniform, and transportation would make the cost per student even higher. Some of these school systems run for profit and almost like a business have branches all over Pakistan such as Beaconhouse, Froebels, and City School to name a few. Students in these schools take the Ordinary and Advanced Level exams

from the London, Oxford, or Cambridge boards in United Kingdom. The curriculum in these schools is dictated by the boards that conduct the examinations.

Educational policies have been seen to promote the class difference in terms of the medium of instruction and making English as a permanent place in the educational system. In particular, Ayub Khan President of Pakistan from 1958-1969, the first Pakistani native to take the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army after General Sir Douglas Gracey and the first Field Marshal of Pakistani armed forces believed that English medium schools were meant to produce ruling elites. He is credited and responsible for establishing more armed forces and cadet schools, thereby encouraging the use of English languages in Pakistan (Rahman, 2004). The Commission report of 1966 stated (Government of Pakistan Commission Report, 1966) that the education system should produce some “better” students who are disciplined and trained to enter the military service, higher administrative positions, or executive positions in government, semi-government, and private offices and institutes.

Thus the government itself has promoted a parallel system of education in Pakistan that creates an access and equity gap between the working class and the upper middle and elite classes. A fact that cannot be denied is that the graduates of the private or public English medium schools are more likely to be employed with better paying jobs compared to graduates from Urdu and other vernacular language schools.

Religious School System (madaris)

Islamic religious schools have been operating since the 11th century in India and became more popular during the time of the British rule to preserve and protect the

Muslim identity. At the time of Pakistan's independence, in 1947 there were approximately 137 religious schools (Rahman, 2004). Table 1 above indicates the total number of mosques schools and religious schools (madaris) in 2005. Today, 14,123 mosques schools and 12,153 madaris exist in Pakistan with a total enrollment of 2,352,146 (7% of total student enrollment), according to Education Census (2005). The Education Census categorizes them on the basis of education provided to students. Mosque schools provide organized or recognized education such as a primary and middle school. The madaris on the other hand provide formal religious education. Fair (2006), and Rahman and Bukhari (2006), also categorize religious schools according to their scope of education, but their distinction is a little different from that of the Education Census. One type of religious school is called maktab, where students learn to read, recite, and memorize Quran while attending public or private schools. Madaris on the other hand provide religious education which range from 8-16 years with Bachelors, and Master's degrees. This education includes subjects such as: Quran, Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad), Arabic language (Quranic grammar, literature, rhetoric, translation, and exegesis), Fiqh (Islam's application and understanding), theology, philosophy, some include foreign languages such as Persian and German. After a particular level, students are taught the same subjects as those in the public schools such as English, mathematics, geography, history, Pakistan Studies, and general science (Rahman & Bukhari, 2006).

The curriculum for the madaris is referred to as Dars-e-Nizami and dates back to the 7th and the 11th century (Fair, 2006, Rahman 2004, Rahman & Bukhari, 2006). Most of the students enrolled in madaris belong to poor families; however some parents who

can afford to send their children to public or private school still choose to send them to madaris. Education in madaris is free including boarding, books, and food. Almost all madaris are affiliated with one of the five boards of religious education with a syllabus committee that provides amendments and changes in the curriculum.

Madaris have been in the forefront in the media, and associated with militancy, violence, and terrorism after the 9/11 incident in United States. Media, reports, and articles have claimed that madaris are the lead producers of Islamic militants such as the Taliban, and fundamentalists. Interviews and surveys of students, teachers in madaris, and government officials conducted by Fair (2006) and Rahman (2004) provide no evidence that militants are being produced in madaris. Another important aspect to understand is the fact that these madaris were funded by equipment as well as finances by the West, in particular United States and United Kingdom in the 1980s to help the Afghans fight against the Soviet Union. During that time, these fighters were labeled freedom fighters then and today they are labeled terrorists and militants. The Government of Pakistan has since the 9/11 incident tried to regulate what is being taught in madaris, however they have met little support from the teachers and administrators of these schools. Madaris teachers believe that since 97% of Pakistanis are Muslims, they should be provided with education that blends secular with religious knowledge and teachings to instill Islamic values among the citizens.

Ghost/Nonfunctional Schools

According to the National Education Census (2005), there are approximately 17,891 non-functional public schools in Pakistan. All these schools belong to rural areas

in Pakistan. Out of the 12,737 non-functional public schools across Pakistan, 7,442 (58.5%) are located in the Sindh province (southern Pakistan). These non-functional schools may also be referred to as ghost schools. These schools are included in the education budget every year and are provided funding accordingly. However, it is interesting to note that even though buildings for these schools exist, the list of students, teachers, administrators, and expenses only exist on paper. Thus 7.7% schools in Pakistan exist on paper. According to two reports from a distinguished newspaper in Pakistan, Dawn, the existence of the ghost schools can be attributed to the corruption in the government sector that has “plagued” the education system of Pakistan since its inception (Ghost schools galore, 2006; Sindh’s ghost schools, 2006). The Country profile (2007) and Bokhari (1998) report that ghost schools reflect the hegemonic domination of the feudal ruling elite to serve their purposes of promoting illiteracy. These feudal elites and wealthy landowners use or sublet the ghost school buildings for private interests, some of which include underground liquor factory, drugs, mafia, gang promotion, stocking grain, and pen livestock (Bokhari, 1998; Bearak, 2003).

Even after the release of information regarding ghost schools in the education census, federal and provincial education ministers have not enacted a plan to improve the conditions especially as they relate to ghost schools. Sindh’s education minister assured in November 2006 that 1,300 schools out of a total of 7,442 will be reopened (Sindh’s ghost schools, 2006), however there have been no reports since then about these schools to claim whether there has been any improvement in this regard. What does this reflect upon the government’s interests in providing free universal education to its citizens? The

corruption of the government is especially costly upon the lives of its citizens. The government does not have any control upon feudal culture in Pakistan. Most of the politicians including the current President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari belongs to areas that have nurtured and cultivated such corrupt systems. Such politicians have created a hegemonic system of control and power that is very hard to eradicate. Providing educational opportunities to children and adults rural areas on a smaller level is one form of action against feudalism. I propose some ideas later in this dissertation.

Curriculum and Standard of Education

In the case of Pakistan, public school curriculum is defined through national standards set by the Federal Ministry of Education and textbooks govern the implementation of those standards at the school level. Some private schools except those who are registered with the British boards also follow the public school curriculum. Teachers consider rote learning and memorization of the answers as the best solution for their students to be successful at school. The questions provided in the textbooks are exactly the same as those assessed through standardized testing. Therefore, those students who excel in rote learning and are able to reproduce are the most successful at school (K-12). This format of education changes at the college or university level where students are taught in English as the medium of instruction and are expected to apply their knowledge and skills, and yet they are ill-prepared by k-12 schools.

Textbook Boards were established in 1959 as a result of educational policy that focused on providing the welfare concept of education. This welfare concept implied the following: (1) good education and educational expansion is expensive, and (2) since

citizens are the only one who will benefit from education, the expense of education must be borne by them. The government's interest seemed very short sighted in limiting the benefit of education to its acquirers. The government bears the cost of elite/cadet schools that produce the rulers of the country and thus felt comfortable in limiting the scope of education. The main task of textbook boards was to ensure that such governmental educational policies were reflected and became a key part of the textbooks in public schools and those private schools that followed the public school curriculum. The Government of Pakistan (1959) Commission Report provided policies for governing textbooks. These policies were related to infusing Islamic spirituality combined with three fundamental ideologies of Pakistan: freedom, integrity, and strength coined by the founder Quaid-eAzam (Father of the Nation) Muhammad Ali Jinnah, national identity and unity, and the training necessary to live in a modern society. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, not a devout believer himself, yet a person of integrity and principles, believed that a nation's unity came from the diversity it had. Islamic teachings reinforce and recognize diversity among people. In the Quran, Allah says: O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may recognize one another (Quran, 49:13). At another point, it has been stated "If Allah willed, He would have made you one nation but that He may test you in what He has given you" (Quran, 5:48).

The emphasis was, and still remains, on the male figure, the skills he needs to be successful in the society, and a national identity through the use of one language, Urdu. This ideology and system of values hidden and deeply embedded in the curriculum and

textbooks deprives students from different cultures, ethnicities, religions, and regional languages, even today, by forcing them to assimilate in urban or westernized mode of education. What is nationhood and unity? Such influences hidden in the textbooks create the notion of the “other”. Essentially, the students cannot relate to the curriculum designed for instilling the values and ideologies of the government. Such practices, according to Said (1978), justify the conquest of the Orient to civilize it, a project of colonialism inherited by the Pakistani government.

The textbooks of the 1960s, and even today, contain stories, pictures, and scenarios that are alien to rural, working-class, poor students and, thus, the only option they have is to memorize the concepts and pass the exams without much understanding of the subject matter. Textbooks are dull, poorly printed, and focused on the government’s interest of increasing illiteracy. In addition, these textbooks picture a boy or man as powerful, strong, and one who dominates every field of life, whereas the books depict a girl or woman as submissive, timid, and one who is confined to the house and children. Halai (2007) conducted an analysis of mathematics textbooks published by the Sindh textbook board. She found that out of total 125 word problems relating to the concept of percentages and ratios, 109 word problems made a reference to males, while 10 made a reference to girls either by name or use of pronouns. 6 word problems were gender neutral. In addition, she attests that socially constructed gender stereotypes can be observed if one looks at the content of the word problems, questions, examples, and explanations provided in the mathematics textbooks. For example many questions pertain

to cricket (popular sport in Pakistan), cricket heroes, batting and bowling averages, and scenarios that are often “culturally” associated with men.

Teachers discourage students from asking questions that challenge the information in textbooks, from answering and interpreting questions critically, and from thinking and responding creatively. Thus, any deviation from the teacher’s method of instruction and the norms set up in the classroom are looked down upon. An average public school teacher has forty-eight students in her or his class. No matter which public school one visits, one will find teachers trained in this educational system dealing with their students in a similar way, promoting the oppression of the masses and gaining power and control over their students. With this constrictive view of education and school practices in public schools, it is reasonable to understand that parents do not find investing in a child’s education as significant for his or her growth as an individual. What has the government done to increase the sources of knowledge production for the students and broaden their horizons to make them think creatively?

To address these major issues related to curriculum and develop a positive learning environment with a dialogic teacher-student relationship, there is a need to study critical literacy pedagogy and feminist pedagogy integrated with the premises of Islam. The framework in this study incorporates these different forms of literacy as way to improve literacy rates and encourage students to attend school, thereby increasing the enrollment rate.

Low School Enrollment

Pakistan faces the issue of low school enrollment for both genders. According to the National Plan of Action 2001-2010, the primary school age group (5-10 years) population was approximately 18 million in 2000, of which 9.3 million were boys and 8.6 million were girls. Net enrollment at primary level is approximately 12 million (66% of the total population), of which 7.6 million are boys (82% of total boy population between age 5-10) and 4.8 millions are girls (55% of total girls population between age 5-10). Rural population is 12.2 million (68%) and urban population is 5.7 million (32%) (National Plan of Action, 2001; Education Census, 2005).

According to the Education Census (2005), girls' enrollment drops from 1,879,612 in Grade 1 to 1,003,237 in Grade 5, a drop of almost 50% and 201,753 in Grade 12, a drop of almost 90% in enrollment. Similarly for boys, enrollment drops from 2,473,929 in Grade 1 to 1,412,646 in Grade 5, a drop of almost 42% and 200,945 in Grade 12, a drop of almost 80%. Major causes and factors for low enrollment and literacy were identified in the National Plan of Action (2001). These include: (1) Students live a long distance from school and have a lack of physical facilities in schools; (2) students have substandard textbooks and a curriculum that is irrelevant to the needs of the community; (3) schools lack qualified women teachers; (4) schools have a high teacher–student ratio (48:1); (5) students experience gender disparities in curriculum and textbooks; (6) poverty is pervasive; (7) parents lack an understanding of the value/benefits of education; and (8) the cost of sending children to school is high when they could be helping at work and home. The National Plan of Action does not take

socio-cultural issues, particularly those associated with women, into account. In addition, it overlooks the fact that most children in elementary schools drop out of school due to family pressure to work at home or find employment as cheap labor in farmlands during harvesting and ploughing seasons. Other contributing factors are the family's poverty, a lack of educational quality in the schools, and the children's lack of interest in school (Latif 2009).

Is the government willing to spend more on education and provide different avenues for the children? This question is still to be addressed and given attention to by the officials who sit in luxurious offices enjoying their morning coffees, lunches, and breaks and have hardly anything to offer to the people of Pakistan, who are essentially deprived of the very basic necessities of life. Educational expenses are enough to burden the people and boost the mainstream mindset for illiteracy among the next generations.

Achievement Scores

The gender analysis of the 2005 secondary school certificate annual exam taken by students of Grade 10 indicates that 65% girls and 54% boys passed it (Shami and Javaid, 2005). The performance of girls in the science group (biology, chemistry, and physics) is higher (82%) than that of boys (65%). Similarly, in the general group (mathematics, statistics, and economics) girls perform higher (53%) than boys (32%).

The gender analysis of the 2005 higher secondary school certificate annual exam taken by students of Grade 12 indicates that 62% girls and 52% boys passed it (Shami and Javaid, 2005). The performance of girls in the science group (biology, chemistry, and physics) is higher (75%) than that of boys (68%). Similarly, in the general group

(mathematics, statistics, and economics) girls perform higher (67%) than boys (48%).

The results indicate that even though girls' enrollment is low, they are still outperforming boys in the achievement scores. Making the curriculum relevant for girls and fulfilling their learning needs, will result in better performance on the achievement tests; one of the indicators of student performance and success. Educators would then be able to retain girls in schools to continue their education so that they are able to live a more informed and progressive life, are conscious of maternal and children's health, create more sustainable families, are empowered, and productive.

Conclusion

It is evident and clear that the government wants to promote a sense of illiteracy by creating ways for class and gender disparities either through funding elite schools or by preparing educational reforms and policies to fulfill their agenda without considering the needs and plights of the people in the country. It is difficult to see how things can become better or literacy can increase with such a stringent structure of education, where the focus is only on the ruling elite and those six percent of the citizens who can complete their high school and possess the ability to at least understand and write in English.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL, CULTURAL, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN EDUCATION

Pakistani citizens face multiple interlinked issues such as social, cultural, political, and religious that may affect their chance of receiving an education. Poverty is rampant in Pakistan. Considering it as an indicator for human development, one can assume that aspects of survival, food, and shelter are more vital than economic or educational growth. Pakistan's 35.1 percent of the population is involved in agriculture (68% live in rural areas and work on lands) and lies below poverty line. Even though there has been some growth in the agricultural sector (approximately 3.6 percent every year), there has not been a decline in the poverty level of the workers, especially those in the agriculture. Islam (1996) reports that Pakistan has made a considerable progress in reducing consumption since the 1970s, however other aspects/dimensions of poverty have not improved much since 1947. These dimensions include malnutrition, premature mortality, high disease burden and illiteracy (Islam, 1996).

One aspect that Islam (1996) claims as having an effect on the reduction of poverty is the support and power provided to feudal lords in rural areas by the elite ruling authorities. Feudal lords, a majority in Sindh and Punjab provinces fail to provide ownership rights to occupancy tenants, thus demanding more from farmers. Even though feudal culture is present in Pakistan to a great extent, Rahman (2005) states that there has

been no organized movement against it. This indicates that basic health and education remain a high concern for citizens of Pakistan. This also implies that the capitalist mindset of feudal lords and politicians have created a gap of poverty (haves and havenots) by not meeting basic human needs and promoting illiteracy. This chapter explains the effects of social, cultural, political, and religious issues on providing school aged children access to education.

Even though school enrollment has increased since Pakistan's independence, quality of education has always been an issue and challenge. Siddiqui (2006) in explaining challenges of Pakistan's economy refers to the quality issue in all sectors of development, including education and health. Quality she claims is vital to "capture the effect of human capital on economic growth" (p. 259). This implies that quality of education results in a country's economic growth. Quality has been used here in a very limited way. Pakistan's educational sector has focused on quantity (increasing enrollment) rather than quality. These issues of quality and quantity can significantly be addressed if the government places education as a priority for all citizens and provides learning opportunities to both men and women. Siddique (2006) provided four major reasons affecting the education of school-aged children in Pakistan: (1) relevance of curriculum to the needs of the people; (2) lack of linkages between the educational sector, industry, and labor market; (3) investment in education is little compared with the needs; (4) segregation of schools based on the medium of instruction (English vs. Urdu) and socio-economic conditions of the citizens.

If citizens' basic needs are not being met, how can they be expected to send their children to school? In an effort to support middle and high school students, the government is under Education Sector Reforms (ESR) providing them with free books and stipends (Rs. 200/\$ 2.50) (National Plan of Action, 2001; National Education Policy, 1998). However, due to inflation and rising costs of staple food items (rice, flour, and sugar), this support from the government is not sufficient to meet the needs of people, especially those 68 percent residing in rural areas.

Effect of Colonialism

Pakistan was part of the British colony in India since the 17th century and gained independence in August, 1947 as an Islamic Republic. Since British influence on the sub-continent (Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh) lasted for more than 250 years, it seems vital to study, historicize, and analyze the schemes and effects of different forms of British colonial knowledge and practice on Pakistan's educational system.

The project of colonialism was control and power (Cohn, 1996). The British colonizers focused on ways to gain power over their colonized Indians. "The conquest of India was a conquest of knowledge" (p. 16). Thus in the eighteenth century, the British made efforts to officialize processes and systems that provided them a chance to gain control over Indian states and introduce new concepts. Some of these processes and concepts included: separation of public and private, keeping records of transactions such as property, privatizing property, mass production, cash crops, construction of communication systems such as railways, standardizing languages and knowledge, and

changing the system of schooling to that of teaching a standardized curriculum aimed at producing moral and productive citizens (Cohn, 1996; Khan, 1995, Azhar, 1995).

The Moghul Empire ruled India for almost 400 years before the British captured it as a colony after War of Independence in 1857. Under Moghul Empire, land was essentially the Emperor's ownership, with a concept of shared or communal farming. Thus, even though small pieces of land were given away for loyalty, there was no notion of privately owned property that was introduced by the British. After the advent of British, land was provided to "nobles" or people belonging to the upper strata of the society. Therefore, the idea of *jagirdaars*, *waderas*, *zamindars*, or feudal lords started emerging among Indians. As feudal lords were created, notion of communal farming took the form of tenants, who had to pay rent to land owners. This rent in some cases was raised by 90 percent, and in other cases to 70 or 80 percent (Khan, 1995).

Inheritance laws created by the British are still prevalent in the Pakistani society today. Khan (1995) argues that the concept of "primogeniture" was introduced by the British (p. 6). This meant that only the eldest son of the land owner or, in today's language, feudal lord could inherit the property. Thus, younger sons and daughters were prohibited from any inheritance. Islam (dominant religion in Pakistan) provides inheritance rights to all female and male members of the family. Therefore, this specific law of inheritance was against Islamic principles. Even though, in 1938 (after at least 50 years), the British acknowledged and accepted the Islamic inheritance law, it did not help to eradicate the differences that this law had created. Therefore, as a result of the British law, even today very few women in Pakistan, especially those in rural areas inherit

property from their families (Khan, 1995). Interesting to note is that in 1958, 11 years after Pakistan's independence, 90% of the land was owned by only 6% of the population. Today, at least 50% of the land is owned by 2% of the population (Lancaster, 2003). This is the major cause of poverty in rural areas. The tenants cannot be equated in status to the landowners and have to work hard to provide enough crops to landowners barely making both ends meet. In case of any disobedience, families are killed, jailed, or abandoned by the feudal lords of the area. Thus, these feudal lords do not only control land, they control people, including law enforcement and judicial systems of the area. The government has not considered doing anything about this feudal culture since 80% of the government officials breed such cultures in their own areas.

Issues of Curriculum and Education

Religious texts were the primary source of knowledge before colonialism and until 1813 when the British became involved in Indian education through the Charter Act that promised to provide Rs. 100,000 annually for Indian education. A majority of this money was spent on establishing educational facilities for training Indians to work in the public sector (Langohr, 2005). "Educational policy was initially based on the idea of filtration: the colonial government would educate the elite, who would then instruct the masses" (p. 170). Kumar (1991) quotes from Bombay report of 1844:

The object of Government we take to be perfectly distinct and intelligible, namely, to make as vigorous an impression upon the Asiatic mind as possible, to rouse it from the torpor into which it has subsided for some hundred years past, and to place it in a condition for receiving and digesting the results of European progress and civilization . . . Ignorance in all ages has been the fruitful mother of vice, in a great degree by the undue development given to the passions in minds . .

. One of the main duties of Government in modern times is to protect one class of its subjects, the weak, the unwary, the helpless, in one word the large majority, from the unprincipled few, and the remedy, acknowledged to be the most available one, is to inspire the bulk of the population with the desire, and to afford them the means of acquiring as much exact knowledge as possible on the various subjects and idea. (p.32)

The main aim of colonialism from this report seems to be the education and transformation of the presumably ignorant minds in the “exact” forms of knowledge guided by scientific tradition and Victorian morals and values. Thus the Indian temptation to study in an English school became a source for them to be civilized, disciplined, and a security for colonizers to dominate the masses. The British planted roots for standardization of knowledge with all schools following the same curriculum and textbooks (teaching through non-religious text) during the eighteenth century. This meant that teachers in those schools had to undergo rigorous training in teaching curriculum the way the British felt it necessary. Kumar (1991) points out that this training was to a great extent imposing on teachers, the English values and morals such as what time of the day each subject area should be taught, how students should be seated in the classroom, and behavior management (punishments and fine imposed on students’ disruptive behavior). Thus religion was devalued and alienated in the schools, which was once thought to be the best form of literary text becoming a demoralizing factor for Indians.

Later, the Despatch of 1854 was formulated as a document of Indian education by the British parliament, which became the basis of Indian education for at least the next 100 years (Saigol, 1995). The main aim of this document was to produce civil servants

that could sub-ordinate the British personnel, help the mission of colonialism, and gain loyalty among the masses.

Students were required to sit for matriculation/secondary certificate examinations and produce memorized answers to questions that they had been taught at school, a traditional approach to education which is to this date the most prevalent style of teaching and examination conducted in Pakistani and Indian schools. “Storage of knowledge for guaranteed dumping at the examination desk necessitated a string symbolic association between the concept of knowledge and the prescribed textbook” (Kumar, 1991, p. 67). This is evidence to the fact that school knowledge was isolated from the everyday reality and cultural aspects of a student’s life.

Today, the educational system of Pakistan, as explained in chapter 2 has its foundations in the system started by British colonizers. Even though the content has changed to some degree, pedagogy remains the same – authoritarian, limited to only “one-way transmission of knowledge” (Saigol, 1995, p. 24). The change in curriculum may be attributed to the needs of local elite and bureaucracy and not necessarily of students. I can clearly recall, that when I was in a public high school (intermediate level); I was taught through the same textbooks that my teachers and mother had studied - - sad to see that the world of information remained stagnant for almost 30-40 years.

Issues of Language

English is the official language of the Government of Pakistan with strong emphasis on its promotion in policies, schooling process of children, defining identity, and a source of class difference in the country. Since the time of the British in India,

English was used as a source of power and control in different aspects including government, military, education, media, administration, corporate sector, and business (Rahman 2005). The main goal of the British in regards to inclusion of the English language instead of Persian was “orientalism”, a concept mentioned by Said (1978) to objectify, civilize, and devalue the other/Orient. Rahman (2005) quotes Philips:

The abolition of the exclusive privileges which the Persian language has in the courts and affairs of court will form the crowning stroke which will shake Hinduism and Mohammedanism to their centre and firmly establish our language, our learning, and ultimately our religion in India (p. 121).

Rahman (2005) explains three ways that Muslims in South Asia have responded to the English language since the time of British colonialism: (1) “rejection and resistance, (2) acceptance and assimilation, and (3) pragmatic utilization” (p.119). English was seen as an alienating and socially disruptive force that would lessen the religious fervor and promote English values and morals among Muslims of the sub-continent. Middle class Muslims realized the need for studying English in order to assimilate in the British culture and become a part of ruling elite similar to the Hindus and Sikhs. The more pragmatic Muslims believed that any form of resistance against colonialism was impossible without learning English. These pragmatists kept their Muslim identity firm, yet gained necessary skills needed to be equal to the ruling elite and having their power share in the society. Thus English became a form of identity, power, sophistication, empowerment, and social and cultural capital in the society which still exists to this date.

Imam (2005) explains the problems with global English in Bangladesh which are very much applicable to the case of Pakistan. She asserts that English is a source of

“global hegemony” (p. 479) where the West deliberately tries to impose its political and economic interests on third world countries. Moreover, third world countries become prone to “development” through Western outsourcing and market investment due to language privilege of the elite. To this Gibbons (1985) states “the third world itself began to experience a measure of disenchantment, when it was discovered that development aid was not really aid, but a business investment camouflaged to look like development aid” (p. 40). Imam (2005) argues that similar to the business strategy of the West, the educational sector in third world countries becomes a market for western publications due to the English language and values. The local elite fluent in the language pursue education in the West causing a brain drain in their native country and increasing the revenue of Western countries by paying thrice the amount of local education. She emphasizes that in order to increase the literacy rate in developing countries, the government should focus on strengthening their citizens’ skills in the national/regional languages so that they are able to strengthen their skills in a second language-English.

English language has been associated with power and privilege for people in Pakistan especially as it relates to education and schooling of children. The elitist and upper middle class have access to English medium schools where as working and poor class are limited to the Urdu medium schools with English being taught as a second language. Rahman (2004) states that elementary students attending public schools (Urdu medium of instruction) can read Urdu but have no or very little comprehension of the English language. Students in secondary classes possess little English language skills but not enough to converse in it.

English language has been promoted in Pakistan's educational policies and plans since independence and still continues today. The question is about government's role in creating an ever widening gap between the English elite and working/poor class in Pakistan. Why do Pakistanis have to accept and adopt a language with its normative and value-filled baggage that colonized them for 250 years? Is the importance given to the English language due to globalization, so called development, Western pressure to assimilate, find markets in the third world, and impose Western policies? The introduction of textbooks and curriculum in English for Science and Math is being piloted in many parts of the capital, Islamabad to see its success. Eventually the public schools are moving towards accepting English as the medium of instruction in all public schools making it even more difficult for the culture of teaching/colonizing to improve from that of rote learning and traditional education to that of inclusiveness and diversity. Said (1991), quotes Samuel Coleridge "language is the armory of the human mind; and at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquests (p. 136)". What happens to diversity in terms of language and culture that exists in Pakistan? Is the government selling or compromising it for acceptance in the world? English can be taught as a second language because eventually its use and necessity cannot be denied, however it should not be considered as a "displacer of national tradition, an instrument of continuing imperialist intervention, a fierce colonizer of every kind of identity" (Imam, 2005, p. 474).

Political Issues in Education

Muslims (Moghul Empire) ruled India between the 11th and the 18th century, until the start of British colonialism in the 1700s. Thus Muslims were apprehensive and reluctant to embrace colonialism in the way Hindus and other religious groups embraced it (Rahman, 2005). Haqqani (2006) argues that feudal culture still dominantly prevalent in Pakistan unlike its neighbor India is due to the leadership of the Muslim League, the main political party in India to support the cause of the Muslims. The Muslim League leadership was assumed in 1934 by the wealthy and authoritative Muslims, most of whom were also landlords (Khan, 1995). It is assumed that these landlords joined the party for their own political and economic interests. Thus ruling people, in order to maintain their status quo and hegemonic structure, neither had an interest in democracy nor in the promotion of Islamic values after Pakistan's independence. The promotion of hierarchical social structure can be attested by the fact that the government and law enforcement agencies do not have much control of the area that comes under the authority of feudal lords in Pakistan. This led to weak leadership in Pakistan especially during the earlier years including a constant survival and defense threat from its neighbor India. Two things that have been most affected by this culture is education and the status/role of women in the society.

Hassan (2006) provides three factors for Pakistan's upheaval and current state of affairs: "tendencies of dictatorship, the lack of representative and democratic institutions of viable strength, and the absence of judicial independence to safeguard the federal structure" (p. 278). The military chiefs have since 1958 taken advantage of weak political

leadership in Pakistan and gained power as heads of state until August of 2008 when General Pervez Musharraf resigned as Pakistan's President for 9 years. The military has ruled Pakistan for more than half of its existence on the map of the world (Haqqani, 2006). In other words, Pakistan was ruled by people who assumed leadership themselves without truly representing the people of Pakistan. Moreover, the corruption and misuse of resources in all governmental aspects including education has been part and parcel of the political game with no hopes of democracy in the near future. During the reign of Ayub Khan in the 1950s, lands were allotted to senior civil, judicial, and military servants, thereby facilitating the culture of feudalism in Pakistan. Zulifiqar Ali Bhutto, who did gain power through and for democracy, was overthrown by military dictatorship of General Zia ul Haq in 1977. It is important to address that Bhutto reduced the land tenants rent or "share of agricultural produce for landowners to 50%, realizing that he himself was a feudal lord in the Sindh province (Khan, 1995).

Hassan (2006) argues that military rulers of Pakistan had vested interests in reforming and proposing constitutions that served their own purposes and interests. One particular aspect pointed by Rahman (2004) was an interest in increasing government funded English medium armed forces and cadet schools for educating the ruling elite of Pakistan and promoting the English language in schools and governmental offices.

Pakistan's first constitution was formulated after nine years of its independence and the first country-wide elections took place 23 years after its independence indicating the importance that was given to democracy and other basic needs of its citizens such as food, shelter, electricity, and gas (Haqqani, 2006; Khan, 1995). Many cities in Pakistan

still do not have a supply of gas and electricity. How can citizens expect an improvement in the quality of education since 1947 when they do not have their basic necessities met?

Recently, after Benazir Bhutto's assassination in December 2008, democratic elections in February 2009, removal of Pervez Musharraf as President of Pakistan, and selection of Asif Ali Zardari (Bhutto's husband) as leader and president of Pakistan, education has taken another halt. The continuous political disintegration and unrest with politicians' vested interests in defense puts education as the last priority, evidenced through the allocation of only 2.21% of the budget for education. Even though there is an influx of billions of dollars through international agencies: the leading one being United Nations, the situation is getting worse due to: (1) control of feudal lords, (2) limited areas receiving funding, and (3) policy decisions without consulting stakeholders. Significant efforts need to be made by the government in order to address educational needs of the citizens.

Social and Cultural Issues

Pakistan faces a number of social and cultural issues such as poverty, malnutrition, infant mortality, and lower status of women. For the purposes of this dissertation, I only focus on the status of women in society.

Status of Women

Since Pakistan's inception, women and children have been victims of violence, oppression, illiteracy, and poverty, particularly in rural areas. With the absence or in some cases scarcity of basic resources such as gas, electricity, water, and food; it becomes even more difficult for families to think about educating their children,

especially girls. The dowry system is very common, which encourages parents to save money for a girl's marriage, thereby denying her right and expenses for education. Marriage traditions and customs force young girls to get married as soon as they attain puberty so that parents are relieved of a girl's burden. In addition, *Watta-Satta* is very common and customary in the rural areas. It refers to an exchange of brother and sister for example the bride's brother is married to the bridegroom's sister. This is the best and most effective way to secure and guarantee mutual rights to each other's families. However, in most cases a disagreement, separation, or divorce between one pair affects the relationship of the other, which is detrimental as it affects and creates multiple problems for the families. Middle and working class families marry within their tribes. The elite, upper class, and educated families sometimes do consider marriages outside their tribe.

Two major concepts, perhaps attributed to Islam, which in fact are cultural practices are: چادر اور چار دیواری (the veil and house enclosure/boundaries), and

گھر کی بات باہر نہیں کرنی چاہیے (matters of the house should not be told outside) (Saigol [b], 1995;

Jafri, 2008). These notions about a woman, particularly in rural areas, make her role and status in the society very restricted. Thus, she is expected to stay inside the house at most times. She can leave the house only in emergency situations, in such cases, she has to be covered from head to toe, so that no one can recognize her and tell her husband or family members about her whereabouts (Haroon & Zia, 1995). In the case of girls, they can only

go from home to school and back, in similar conditions mentioned above. I clearly remember the lust with which men stared at the girls when they went to and from the schools. My research participants often told me that “this is what we have to go through every single day, in case we stop somewhere or do something, our fathers know about it before we reach home.” In the northern areas of Pakistan such as Swat, women are not allowed to leave their houses even to visit women’s stores. Figure 1 illustrates the seclusion of women from one perspective. It depicts a picture of a woman’s tailor who has a sign posted in Urdu stating “women are not allowed here”. In addition, if a man has sewing skills, why not sew men’s clothes? Why is he stitching women’s clothes and not even letting her design her own clothes? Such areas in Pakistan including areas under feudal lords have banned girls’ education resulting in the creation of an oppressive environment for women. Looking at this figure from another perspective, such situations where a man has to segregate women from places may also result from women’s attitude and behavior. In order to gain a man’s attention, a woman may seek to find ways to visit places such as a tailor’s shop.



Figure 1: A women's tailor in Swat (north-west Pakistan)

Another reason behind the second concept stated above of not sharing domestic matters with anyone outside the home breeds violence among women. Men take advantage of this concept to exploit a women's role both at home and in society (Saigol [b], 1995). Since a woman cannot talk about her problems to anyone, she has to be silent and submissive, she has to put up a behavior and attitude that is acceptable, thereby maintaining honor and chastity of the family. Honor is an assumed part of a woman and considered sacred in the Pakistani culture. I explain the term honor and types of violence associated with that for women in the next section. In addition, I explore how the judicial system, particularly laws, has lowered women's status in society.

Honor of a Woman

Girls are a disgrace for the family, particularly in the northern and western areas of Pakistan (Balochistan and N.W.F.P. provinces). Unlike celebrations at the birth of a son, a girl's birth is mourned. Even though there are no estimates available, it is a fact that females may be buried alive at birth or female fetuses are aborted, very similar to conditions in India (Goodwin, 2002). According to Coomaraswamy (2005), honor or shame is associated with a man controlling a woman's body, behavior, freedom, and sexuality. This man has four forms: father and brother when a woman is unmarried, and husband or son when a woman is married. Thus a woman or girl has to stay confined within the boundaries of "appropriate" behavior, in order to maintain honor of the family. Haroon and Zia (1995) define honor as the "notion of woman as property" (p. 66). In cases where a woman: falls in love, is involved in extramarital relationships, seeks divorce, is raped, runs away with a man, and makes the choice of a husband, she is seen

as one who has dishonored her family (Abu Odeh, 1996). Therefore, she is liable to punishment and violence. In most situations, women are abandoned from their families or killed for “honor” (stoned to death or shot).

Honor killings take place in all provinces of Pakistan including tribal areas. In the Punjab province it is known as kalakali, karokari in Sindh, siyakari in Balochistan, and taurtoora in N.W.F.P. (Warraich, 2005; Saigol [b], 1995). These honor killings are promoted by feudal and hegemonic structures in rural areas to maintain social and political control (Ali, 2001). Welchman and Hossain (2005) argue that a woman’s right to property and other social and economic resources are linked with honor. Thus if a woman dares to dishonor the family, she is deprived of her social and economic rights. Other women, particularly those in rural areas, bear the burden of crimes committed by their male family members such as brothers and fathers. Girls and young unmarried women are given in lieu of blood money to the victim’s family, who may treat her as they wish, which in most cases is rape, stoning, or marrying her against her will. All these traditions are forbidden in Islam. Other forms of violence reported by Haroon and Zia (1995) include: forcing women to work in farmlands and using heavy animal carts, physical abuse such as battering and throwing of acid on a woman’s face, trafficking women for the purposes of sexual commodity, and “haq bhuksha” [a custom where a woman is married to the Quran, religious scripture to deprive her economic and social rights] (p. 66). We fail to realize that such norms and customs prevalent in the country deprive a woman of her basic rights to inheritance, autonomy, freedom, and literacy. Further, these make her vulnerable to oppression, violence, and poverty, deprivation.

If men exercise freedom of choice in marriage or engage in extramarital relationships, they are neither questioned nor are their acts looked upon as a betrayal/dishonor to the family. A woman is exploited mentally and physically to the extent that many commit suicide or run away to shelters. The implications of honor killings and violence go beyond the woman who is killed, creating a scar of fear and threat in the hearts of the women and the girls in the family and the community.

Legal System and Women

Pakistan maintained the legal system of the British upon independence. According to Warraich (2005), the British Penal Code of 1860 introduced the concept of honor (“modesty, chastity, enticement and abduction”, p. 81). The law protected third parties instead of women (victims). Thus women are until today considered to be under the custody of one of the four men described above as her legal guardians limiting a woman’s right to freedom. Such and many other laws in the Pakistan are maintained to honor cultural traditions. Zia (1995) claims that Pakistan’s legal system is another form of patriarchy in disguise. In addition, she states that marriage, divorce, and child custody laws are gender biased. Specifically, child custody laws, she explains, provides the right of taking care of the children to a father instead of the mother. Thus a woman thinks many times before she requests a divorce from her husband. Essentially the law discourages a woman to consider divorce because, not only will she be abandoned by her family, her children will also be taken away, with no claim to husband’s property or promised money after divorce. A woman under severe torture or domestic violence usually resumes to submission due to the circumstances created by the government for

her. This aspect particularly interested me because in my experience, women in rural areas have set exorbitant prices on their marriage contract for a divorce and husband's second marriage. In some cases a divorce should provide women a monetary security of Rs.100, 000 - 200,000 (\$1250-2500), whereas, a second marriage provides Rs. 250, 000 – Rs. 350,000 (\$3125-4375), amounts that are outrageous and unaffordable for a man in rural area to pay.

A few laws in favor of Pakistani women are explained by Zia (1995). These include: (1) permission of Union Council in case of second marriage by the husband; (2) a girl of age 16 or less cannot get married; (3) woman can legally demand the mehr (gift of husband on marriage). Even though these laws are broken almost all the time, the concerned parties only need to give away a few thousand rupees to get by these laws and maintain their culture. In my own experience living and meeting people in the village, I can share with certainty that more than 60 percent of the girls get married between the ages of 14 and 17, putting the burden of motherhood on these adolescents.

Women and Agriculture

Pakistan's agricultural labor force is densely populated by women, 79% according to Bari and Pal (2000). Ahmad (1995) argues that the role of rural women in agricultural has been ignored by academicians and the government, especially in implementing policies for the agricultural sector in Pakistan. Since independence, women have contributed significantly to the national economy, agriculture being the main source of exports for Pakistan (Noshab, 2006). She claims that in most cases, women work under severe conditions, as unpaid workers, looking after domestic animals, and working

extended hours both on farmlands and their houses. Their dual responsibility at work and home are an expectation of the family and the society. As a result, girls, who look at their mothers for role models, tend to replicate this behavior in childhood that continues till they become old enough not to work. In addition, rural women are deprived of medical facilities or are discouraged to relate health problems to designated people in health units. Thus, many women die during child birth or do not take care of themselves during and after pregnancy. Lack of water, fuel, and fodder [for animals] make a woman's life even more complicated and dependant. She travel long distances for these basic necessities to fulfill the needs of her family, particularly of her husband. The state and government officials have yet to recognize women's contribution towards the economic growth of the country in particular.

Role of Women in Islam

First, I provide an understanding of my interpretation of Islam. Some may say it is liberal and not conservative; while others may question why my perspective is such. Religious scholars or imams in Pakistan belong to a particular school of thought, namely hanafi, thereby following the interpretations of Imam Abu Hanifa. Looking at how conservatively Islam was being followed and interpreted, I sought to other scholars and schools of thought namely those of Imam Malik and Shaf'i, whose interpretations are recognized throughout the world. It was through the listening to and reading of other female and male scholars, converts to Islam, and Muslims of all ethnicities that I realized the true meaning behind the diversity of meaning in the Quran and Sunnah. I understood why Prophet Muhammad practiced Islamic teachings in many different ways. In addition,

I recognized the purposes behind religion being used to oppress and undermine women. I was the first in my family to wear a *hijab* (head scarf). I was in high school at that time and everyone questioned my interpretation of *hijab* as a form of liberation, freedom, and protection. Thus, as I explain the rights of women, role of education in Islam in this chapter and elsewhere in my dissertation, I interpret and understand it very differently than the scholars and people in Pakistan's rural areas.

Pakistan is an Islamic Republic, meaning that it is 97% Muslim and 3% minority (Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jews to name a few). Pakistan's constitution is based on principles and teachings of Islam as outlined in the Quran (Holy Scripture in Arabic language) and life of Prophet Muhammad. Today, Pakistani women maintain a lower status in the society, particularly in rural areas evidenced through a number of traditions and customs mentioned in the previous sections. Pakistan's culture is deeply rooted in traditions and customs adopted from colonialism and other Indian religions alien to Islam, in which a woman's responsibility is limited to reproduction, managing the household, rearing children, cleaning, and making food. She is believed to be an emotional counterpart of man with much less understanding of the world. She does not have a mind and voice of her own and is treated as a sexual object. If she works, she has dual responsibility (house and work). The culture in rural areas is dictated by "norms" that oppress women, making her a burden for family and society. In such a situation, role and rights of women in Islam are vital to consider for this study to convince parents and community members about the importance and dire need of girls' education.

Fourteen hundred and thirty one years ago God questioned human beings “And when the female (infant) buried alive is questioned. For what sin, was she killed?” (Al-Quran, 7:8). It was very common to bury females at the time of their birth in pre-Islamic Arabia. They were considered mere objects in the hands of males and were exploited, used, and discarded by them. After the advent of Islam, women were granted protection, liberation, freedom, and rights that were alien to people at that time and still today even after so much struggle. Some of these rights include (Al-Quran): (1) right and duty to obtain education, (2) right to own independent property and inheritance, (3) right to work to earn money (4) equality of reward for equal deeds, (5) equal pay for equal work, (6) right to express their opinion and be heard, (7) right to provisions from husband, (8) right to negotiate marriage on terms of her choice, (9) right to obtain divorce, (10) right to keep all her own money, (11) right to get sexual satisfaction, and (12) to refuse any marriage that does not please her.

According to Prophet Muhammad “women are equal counterparts of males”. The only thing that distinguishes men and women according to the Quran is righteousness, which human beings are not capable of judging. In Islam a woman has no financial obligation and thus economical responsibility lies on a man’s shoulders.

Islam elevated the status of mother and concerning her status, a man asked Prophet Muhammad: who is most entitled to be treated with the best companionship by me? The Prophet replied “your mother”. Again the man asked who is next, the Prophet said “your mother”. Again the man asked who is next. The Prophet repeated “your mother”. The man asked for the fourth time about who is next. The Prophet then replied

“your father, indeed paradise is under the feet of the mothers.” God revealed the following verses emphasizing the importance of mother:

And We have enjoined on man doing of good to his parents; with trouble did his mother bear him and with trouble did she bring him forth; and the bearing of him and the weaning of him was thirty months; until when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years, he says: My Lord! grant me that I may give thanks for Your favor which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good which pleases You and do good to me in respect of my offspring; surely I turn to You, and surely I am of those who submit.(Quran, 46:15)

And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (your final) goal. (Quran, 31:14)

According to the Quran, God has placed the responsibility of marriage affairs and dowry on the husband stating “And give women their dowries as a free gift, but if they of themselves be pleased to give up to you a portion of it, then eat it with enjoyment and with wholesome result” (Quran, 4:4). Furthermore, God does not put the spouse in a burden in terms of dowry by stating “Provide for them (wives), the rich according to his income and the poor, according to his means, a provision according to the custom. This is an obligation for those who act kindly” (Quran, 2:236). Even though Islam provides these rights to women, people in Pakistan still practice deeply rooted customs and traditions inherited from other religions in the sub-continent.

Role of Education in Islam

Fourteen hundred and thirty one years ago, Prophet Muhammad received the first revelation of the Quran which states, “Read in the name of your Lord who created, He

created man from a clot, Read and your Lord is the Most Honorable” (Quran 96:1-3). God asked an illiterate person whom He had chosen as a messenger to read. Reading or acquiring knowledge about what God has given us is important for us to function, understand, and appreciate the nature and universe around us. In the Quran, God states that the first knowledge He taught to Adam and Eve was about the world and the universe. Prophet Muhammad stated that seeking knowledge is compulsory for every male and female no matter how far one has to go to find that knowledge. He emphasized in his preaching that we should have an inquisitive mind, one that is always ready to learn, relearn, willing to change, interpret, and interrogate. Following verses further emphasize the importance of knowledge: “Then say (unto them O Muhammad): Can those who know and those who do not know be deemed equal? But only those who are endowed with insight will this in mind” (Quran, 39:9). “And He has subjected to you, (as a gift) from Him, all that is in the heavens and on the earth: behold, in that are messages indeed for people who think” (Quran, 45:13).

Since the time of Prophet Muhammad, he and Muslim rulers who followed after him insisted that every child (male and female) be provided access to education, established and supported institutions of learning and helped elementary education become universal among Muslims. According to Wilds and Lottich (1961):

It was this great liberality which they displayed in educating their people in the schools which was one of the most potent factors in the brilliant and rapid growth of their civilization. Education was so universally diffused that it was said to be difficult to find a Muslim who could not read or write (p. 216).

Thus, education became a vital aspect for Muslim civilization where children even in the villages had access and opportunity to learn and acquire knowledge.

Mosques played a vital role in the dissemination of religious and worldly knowledge throughout Islamic history and today. According to Pedersen (1984):

In scarcely any other culture, has the literary life played such a role as in Islam. Learning (ilm), by which is meant the whole world of the intellect, engaged the interest of Muslims more than anything... The life that evolved in the mosques spread outward to put its mark upon influential circles everywhere (p. 37).

Mosques were the center of Islamic community, a place of prayer, meditation, religious instruction, political discussion, and school (Waardenburg, 1965). Therefore, wherever Islam went from Malaysia to Spain, mosques were established as centers of learning with thousands of students, teachers, scholars, and important libraries. According to Scott (1904), the school became a part of the mosque. The first school connected with a mosque, was established at Medina in 653 A.D. By 900 A.D. almost every mosque had an elementary school for boys and girls. Children usually started school at the age of five years and were taught to write and learn the ninety-nine names of God and simple verses from the Quran. After they mastered basic concepts of reading and writing, the Quran was studied thoroughly with the addition of arithmetic. For those who wanted to study further, the larger mosques had advanced courses such as Arabic grammar and poetry, logic, algebra, biology, history, law, and theology. During the 9th century courses such as philosophy, ethics, chemistry, medicine, engineering, astronomy, and pharmacology were added to the list, thereby attracting people from Syria, Persia (Iran), and India to Baghdad and Spain.

The most essential and basic format of mosque education was Halaqat-al-ilm (study circle). It referred to a gathering of people seated in a circle. Even though teachers exercised authority and control in most cases, students were encouraged to discuss and even challenge and correct the teacher. The Friday study circles were known to have discussions and disputes in all fields of knowledge.

Some mosque schools took the form of colleges or universities. Many of them still exist today as the oldest universities in the world namely Al-Qayrawwan and Al-Zaytuna in Tunisia, Al-Azhar in Egypt, Al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, Morocco and universities of Granada, Seville and Cordoba. Libraries became an important part of these universities such that during the 9th century Cordoba Library had more than 600000 volumes and 40 catalogues (Scott, 1904).

Students were provided assistance and support for their studies in the mosques and schools. At most schools, students were provided stipends while some studied free of charge (Dodge, 1962).

The Islamic system of education had a great impact on the West in particular, some aspects include: teaching methods and granting diplomas. According to Makdisi (1990), Islam influenced university scholarship particularly that of the doctoral dissertations, its defense, peer review of scholarly work, and the academic freedom of students and teachers. The open discussions in the study circles at mosques took place when most of the 'west' was in the dark ages, and when scholarly thoughts were being scrutinized. Many translated books written by Islamic scholars formed the basis of European education during the 12th and 13th centuries (Zaimeche, 2002).

Females enjoyed the same educational privileges as males in the Islamic civilization. In some cases, women outperformed men in poetry and philosophy, similar to what happens in Pakistan today (girls achievement scores are higher than boys) (Scott, 1904).

It can be concluded from the above discourse that Islam lays great emphasis on education for both males and females which can be used to support female literacy in Pakistan.

Conclusion

It is important to contextualize the effects of colonialism, political, socio-cultural, and religious aspects of society on Pakistan's education system. The deeply rooted cultural traditions inherited from colonialism have yet to be uprooted and addressed as significant issues related to education. Feudalism promotes illiteracy by forcing children to work, denying rights to citizens, and making schools a place for selling drugs. The situation is becoming worse now with the increase in political disintegration and unrest in the country during and after Pervez Musharraf's resignation, assassination of Benazir Bhutto, and "democratic" rule of President Zardari. The country needs a transformation and the only way that is possible is for children to have access to education where they are able to cultivate their minds and question the structure, rules, policies, and people who oppress and bind them to their working class environment. Islamic values and teachings have a great impact on the content of the curriculum and textbooks in Pakistan. Even though Islam provides many rights to a woman; to a great extent, the hegemonic and cultural traditions have been reinforced through the curriculum emphasizing men as

the sole givers and receivers of all knowledge. In this context, it is important to take both the secular and religious knowledge into consideration for designing and implementing a literacy curriculum. Thus grounding the design of the curriculum with Islamic values in addition to a critical pedagogy based upon the tenets of the Freirean and feminist ideologies will be most helpful in addressing the needs of girls and elevating their status in the society.

CHAPTER IV

LITERACY AND CURRICULUM

This chapter explores the concept of literacy, curriculum, and provides a pedagogy of social change and compassion that I will implement in the rural girls' school in Pakistan. This chapter comprises of five sections. The first section explains the context of literacy and its various definitions. The second section lists the policies and programs for literacy in Pakistan including efforts by international agencies such as United Nations and the government of Pakistan. The third section describes the history of girls' education and gender disparities. The fourth section explores the concept of domesticity, home, and family literacy practices in Pakistan. In the final section, I encounter the literacy curriculum from a post-colonial perspective. I also explain Freire's critical literacy and feminist pedagogies and how they can be applied to the Pakistani context and culture. Finally in this section I lay the foundation for my pedagogy of social change, consciousness, and compassion for girls in Pakistan.

The Context of Literacy

Literate derives from the Latin word *litteratus*, which means letters of the alphabet (Davis, Dennis & Luce-Kapler, 2000). After World War II, independence was granted to many colonized nations and priority was given to providing educational opportunities and literacy competency to children in order to build economic security. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO) devoted large amounts of resources to these developing nations. During the 1960s, international agencies designed programs in functional literacy, which referred to the development of basic competence in reading and writing in order to foster efficient and informed workers (Wearmouth, Soler, & Reid, 2003). However, it was soon realized that literacy is a more complex cultural and social process needed to transform a society and create awareness.

Each discipline has created its own image of literacy. Language or textual dimensions have been emphasized by linguists, whereas cognitive psychologists have stressed on the mental processes used to generate meaning through and from print (Kucer, 2001). Developmentalists emphasize the patterns displayed in learning to read and write, where as socioculturalists seek to understand the cultural context within which children have developed to interpret, process, and ascribe meaning to the world (Pérez & McCarty, 2004). Thus literacy cannot be considered to be content or context free, it is always filtered through the culture.

Kucer, Silva & Delgado-Larocco (1995) explain the relationship between four different perspectives of literacy. Cognitive lies at the center indicating the desire of the student to explore, discover, construct, and share meaning. The linguistic dimension surrounds the cognitive. This layer represents the language consisting of various systems through which these meanings are expressed by the student. Literacy is a complex socio-cultural act where meaning and language are built and understood through a social identity in which the language is used. At the end, development is an ongoing process where literacy is used in new and novel ways.

Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan has continuously rephrased the way it defines literacy since 1951. Iqbal (2004) provided a detailed history of literacy trends in Pakistan, including various definitions of literacy that the government has used for the purposes of literacy statistics in Pakistan. Table 4 depicts these literacy definitions adapted from Iqbal (2004) and the mid decade assessment of Education for All (EFA) reforms provided by the Ministry of Education (2008).

Table 4: Changing Definitions of Literacy in Pakistan

Census Year	Definition of Literacy	Age Group	Population 10+ (in millions)	Literacy Rate (%)	Illiterate Population
1951	One who can read a clear print in any language	All	22.71	17.9	18.64
1961	One who is able to read with understanding a simple letter in any language	5+	26.12	16.7	22.08
1972	One who is able to read and write in some language with Understanding	10+	42.91	21.7	33.59
1981	One who can read newspaper and write a simple letter	10+	56.33	26.2	42.69
1998	One who can read newspaper and write a simple letter, in any Language	10+	89.84	43.92	50.38
Proposed 2008, postponed to December 2009	Proposed but not implemented. One who can read and write a paragraph in any language with	10+	N/A	49.9	N/A

	understanding and can make simple calculation				
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According to Wearmouth, Soler, and Reid (2003), literacy is defined as the ability to read and write. Eisner (1994) explains the term literacy as the ability of an individual to express meaning in any cultural form. Literacy has often been considered as a road to or an indicator “development”, most commonly socio-economic development (Abbott, 2003), a vehicle for freedom, and a tool for the eradication of oppression, social problems, and poverty in developed countries. I question these so called implications of literacy. According to developmental theory as described by Rostow (1990), developing or underdeveloped countries like Pakistan need to follow the path of developed or Western countries to show any growth in the economy. Thus he emphasized on the concept of developed vs. developing/underdeveloped. Who determines developed and underdeveloped and who is the beneficiary of the consequence? According to Rondinelli (1987), the 1950s and 60s development intervention assumed that “successful methods, techniques, and ways of solving problems and delivering services in the U.S. or other economically advanced countries would prove equally successful in the developing nations (p. 23).” Colonialism in the Indian sub-continent was based on similar principles of importing values, morals, ethics, and culture of the West to the East in order to civilize the “other”. Even today, Pakistani bureaucracy enforces policies and laws that are hard to adapt in the society by people, one of such aspects is literacy, how it is defined through western lens, and its’ consequences... those having an impact on the economy of

Pakistan. Even if the feudal elites of Pakistan restore the ghost schools in their areas, girls and women will never be able to get out of the customs and traditions that bind them to their lower status in the society. Marxist's concept of development: development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin may be better understood in regards to the Pakistani society (Abbott, 2003). One cannot exist without the other implying that one's development is another's underdevelopment: girls' illiteracy is growth and prosperity for the feudal elites. Will the west remain entitled due to the increasing illiteracy in world? Can the so called underdeveloped not have a sense of consciousness about themselves and their surroundings? Do we need international aids to impose the views and models of western education and change the identities and culture of Pakistanis? Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, the government has relied on international funds and support to increase the literacy rate of the country. Billions of dollars have been spent on bringing in western programs, projects, policies, curriculum to the country with no significant effect on the so called "literacy" of its citizens, particularly for women and girls. This has continuously led to the silencing of voices of rural citizens that comprise 65% of the country, an increase in the power imbalances with a dependence on foreign agencies for aide and funds.

Today, literacy has broader implications compared to when it was first used and defined by scholars and how it has been defined by the Government of Pakistan. Literacy is the process of not only reading, writing, and thinking, but of understanding and constructing meaning from within a sociocultural context (Pérez & McCarty, 2004). I use literacy as a complex cultural and social process needed for facilitating social change and

awareness. Literacy, I believe is neither content nor context free, but one that is always filtered through the culture. Thus, in order to have a greater impact from my study, I feel it necessary to first understand the culture and social values of my participants and the research site itself including regional language, traditions, customs, and effects of colonialism. Through my dissertation, I explore how literacy is manifested in girls' lives at home and school, how the government defines literacy and the standards of literacy at the national and international level that pertain to Pakistan, how gender inequities are performed by men and women, and learned by girls, and the relationships that exist between illiteracy and sociocultural norms that bound Pakistani society. In addition, I use critical literacy pedagogy to design and implement curriculum guidelines for rural Pakistani girls. Here, I use critical in the sense of creating consciousness among girls about their role, status, and issues in the society while allowing them freedom to question and critically think about how, and what they are taught in schools and at home.

Policies and Programs for Literacy in Pakistan

International Commitments and Involvement

Pakistan has been in the past and present been a recipient of international aide, including financial and personnel support. United Nations has the main share in contributing towards education reform in Pakistan. Even though this reform is limited in its scope, interventions, and policies, it has once again brought the issue of literacy in the forefront. Further, international efforts have not completely addressed cultural aspects because essentially these efforts imply a push to the government for implementation at the district and school levels.

United Nations Literacy Decade: Education For All. The United Nations Literacy Decade initiative was launched in 2003 under the slogan “Literacy as Freedom” (United Nations Literacy Decade, n.d.; UNESCO, 2007). Even though literacy and basic education for all children and adults was recognized as a right for all citizens under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these still remain a high concern for most of the countries globally. More than 776 million people in the world are illiterate, out of which two-thirds are women. In addition, one in five adults cannot read or write. Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, and India together have at least 60 percent of these 776 million illiterates and the number increases every year (United Nations Literacy Decade, n.d.; UNESCO, 2007). In order to improve the literacy rate in countries to at least 50 percent by 2012, United Nations launched the literacy decade to increase collaboration of international and national communities and to create urgency for literacy efforts.

Dakar Framework of Action on Education For All (EFA). The World Education Forum in Senegal, Dakar in 2000 marked the commitment of action for all countries to provide education for all its citizens. Education was recognized once again as a fundamental human right with prospects to improved “development” and poverty reduction (Barry, 2000). Countries, including Pakistan were advised to develop national action plans that help in achieving and implementing the six goals of the Dakar Framework of Action. These goals included (Barry, 2000): (1) early childhood care and education; (2) free universal basic education for all children by 2015 all children, with a focus on girls, ethnic minorities, and children in difficult circumstances; (3) equitable access to learning programs for all young people and adults; (4) 50 percent improvement

adult literacy by 2015, particularly for women; (5) gender equality in primary and secondary education by 2015, especially with regards to girls' access to basic education; and (6) improvement in all aspects of the quality of education including literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The meeting emphasized that South Asian countries including Pakistan need to increase: their education budget (Pakistan spends less than 2.5% of its Gross Domestic Product on education), international assistance for educational reforms, and public-private partnership. In addition, the report stated that there is a continuous increase in disparities both gender (particularly for girls), and urban-rural which the governments need to pay attention to, besides other curricular issues with education (Barry, 2000).

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI). UNGEI was an initiative launched in April 2000 in Dakar, Senegal with an aim to help governments of countries participating in the Dakar Framework Education for All (EFA) and United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ensure gender equality and access to education, particularly for girls (UNGEI, 2006). United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the lead agency and secretariat for UNGEI. UNGEI partners with different agencies and organizations, those part of United Nations including other governmental, and non-governmental bodies to increase awareness about educational policies, plans, and programs for women and girls' empowerment and education (UNGEI, 2006; UNESCO, 2007). In the case of Pakistan, UNGEI has supported UNICEF's efforts in collaboration with the Norwegian government for increasing girls' enrollment and access to education in five districts in the state/province of Punjab including: Kasur, Mianwali, Rahim Yar

Khan, Rajanpur, Sargodha and Sheikhpura. In these districts, more than half of the 1.4 million children aged five and seven years had never been enrolled in school (UNGEI, 2007). Even though enrollment increased by 85 percent, it is not guaranteed that the traditional drop-out i.e. one of out of every two children, for girls two out of every three drop-out before completing primary education (fifth grade) will decrease due to these efforts. The social and cultural norms remain so deeply embedded that such efforts do not sustain long term effects on the literacy rate of Pakistan, particularly for girls. There is no doubt that the government has to provide ways to maintain and continue individual as well as organizational educational endeavors in order to see an increase in the literacy rate. Governmental efforts may include: enforcement of child labor laws, free textbooks, increase in stipends and scholarships, welfare funds for poor families, and better school facilities to name a few.

UNESCO Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE). The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) is a project initiated by UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) for capacity building and enhancing the quality and scope of literacy in countries that have a literacy rate of less than 50 percent or an illiterate adult population of more than 10 million (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2005). Most of these countries have endorsed United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), goals of the Dakar Framework of Action Plan on Education for All, and United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD). LIFE particularly supports efforts for gender equality, poverty reduction, and women's empowerment. Ministry of Education in Pakistan in

collaboration with UNESCO launched the LIFE project in 2006. Since three years, government and private organizations have worked together with UNESCO to provide programs that improve curriculum, build literacy capacity, and pilot community learning centers in different parts of Pakistan (UNESCO, 2007).

In 2008, UIL held a joint meeting for representatives of nine countries that are part of the LIFE project in Asia and the Pacific region. These countries included Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea. Pakistani representatives and delegation shared their experiences and the progress on literacy aspects in the country. Major aspects reported included (Hanemann, 2008): (1) Pakistan's literacy gender disparity is 25 percent with more than 60 percent of illiterate women; (2) many provinces/states did not respond to the LIFE initiatives and literacy efforts; (3) no women's representation in literacy policy decision-making; (4) ninety percent of the literacy programs have been targeted for girls and women's literacy enhancement; (5) need to make curriculum more relevant to the social and cultural aspects of society with a focus on rights; (6) preparation of a National Literacy Curriculum; (7) use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for the dissemination of literacy; and (8) role of universities, government, and non-governmental organizations should be increased to have a significant effect on the literacy rate.

Government of Pakistan's Role

1973 Constitution of Pakistan. The Constitution of Pakistan states (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, Article 37b, c):

The state shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within possible period; make technical and professional education generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

In addition, there are provisions in the constitution for the respecting and safeguarding religion, race, caste, and class. Constitution of Pakistan (1973), Article 22: 1 & 3 (b) states:

No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony, or worship related to a religion other than his own; no citizen shall be denied admission to any educational institution receiving aid from public revenues on the ground only of race, religion, caste, or place of birth.

Constitution of Pakistan (1973), Article 34 states that “steps shall be taken to ensure full participation of women in all the spheres of national life”. As outlined in the constitution, education is the right of every citizen irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, or domicile (that dictates class). The Federal Government in Islamabad is responsible for providing educational policies, plans, standards for curriculum, assessment and examination (testing) system, which are adopted by provincial/state governments for implementing in school districts accordingly.

Adult Literacy Act of 1987. Since 1947, provisions and promises were made to provide free and compulsory education with a focus on increasing literacy to the extent that literacy was made a pre-requisite in applying for governmental jobs. In 1985, Zia-ul-Haq promulgated the Literacy Ordinance, which was approved by the Parliament and in

1987 and set to be enforced by the Federal Cabinet in 1993, which was postponed. Thus, the Literacy Act of 1987 has been approved but not yet enforced by the Government of Pakistan. This alone has much to say about the government's urgency, commitment, and implementation of plans to increase literacy in the country. The Literacy Act had two main features: (1) driving license, passport, and arms license could only be issued to a literate person; and (2) Federal Government will only employ literate people (Ministry of Education, 2008; ILME & UNESCO, 2008). Recently, in the February 2008 elections, the Supreme Court of Pakistan in Articles 17 and 25 of the Constitution stated that a candidate for elections should hold a Bachelors degree or madrassa qualification, excluding 97 percent of the population from running for elections. This pre-requisite also affected women who could have had a greater participation in the elections. However, later in April 2008, Supreme Court struck down the condition of graduation for candidates to contest elections of Senate, National Assembly and four Provincial Assemblies declaring provision void to Articles 17 & 25 of Constitution.

National Education Policy 1992-2002 and 1998-2010. An Inter-Provincial Education Ministerial body was formed to institutionalize reforms, policies, and create a greater interaction between the Federal Ministry of Education and the provinces. Some of the key characteristics of the policy included: (1) increase literacy rate to 70 percent by 2010; (2) increase non-formal basic education centers from 70,000 to 82,000; (3) increase total educational expenditure from 2.2 percent to 4 percent of Gross National Product by the year 2002-03, and to 7 percent by 2010; (4) increase access to higher education to at least 5% of the age group 17-23 by the year 2010; (5) increase student enrollment for

primary education to 90% and to 105% by year 2010; and (6) Prime Minister Literacy Commission [PMLC] (initiated in 1981 as Literacy and Mass Education Commission, later changed to National Education and Training Commission in 1989, and to PMLC in 1995) will be restored to a formal body with centers in every district, however with the change in government to military, this body no longer exists (ILME & UNESCO, 2008; Iqbal, 2004). The policy projected that if it is not seriously implemented in the country, more than 109 million people will still remain illiterate by 2025. Currently, more than 60 million people have been identified as literate in the country. These estimates can be much higher due to the lack of collecting accurate data in Pakistan. Since many of the proposed features of the policy were not achieved such as enrollment rates and literacy rate, the policy is undergoing revision and review currently to meet the literacy challenges that have still not been met (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Education Sector Reforms (ESR) and National Action Plan (NPA). Under the Dakar Framework for Education for All (EFA), Pakistan formulated NPA for 2001-2015 and also initiated five year series of education sector reform programs with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Research Triangle Institute (RTI) in North Carolina, United States of America from 2002 to 2007. This was the first major effort in the education sector in the past 10 years provided by United States. The main purpose of this plan and reforms was to provide free, universal, compulsory education, free books, increase the literacy rate to 86 percent, and achieve 69 percent female literacy (Iqbal, 2004, Ministry of Education, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2001). In addition, it aimed at updating the curriculum, textbook and learning policies,

providing a national literacy curriculum and ensuring its implementation, teacher training programs, revising the national education policy to be more gender inclusive, increase public-private partnership, ensure the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) for learning, and to institutionalize literacy efforts at all governmental levels (Ministry of Education, 2004; 2008). RTI, in corporation with the Federal Ministry of Education, other international, national, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) implemented the above mentioned reforms in thirteen educational districts across Pakistan. Student enrollment in the target districts increased by 15.5 percent, with training of almost 45,600 teachers, mentors and education administrators in “western” teaching methods and administration. 104,000 students graduated from youth and adult literacy programs; this number is minimal when compared to the 18 million school-aged children population in Pakistan. ESR supported and policy revamping in Pakistan. The following policies were formally approved: National Guidelines for Youth and Adult Literacy, the National Literacy Curriculum, the National Information and Communication Technology (NICT) strategy, and the Operational Policy for Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) (Research Triangle Institute, 2007).

National Literacy Curriculum. Literacy efforts have been initiated since 1947, some were successful while others had to be discontinued due to political reasons mostly but also due to their lack in addressing the needs of the served population. As a result, governmental and non-governmental organizations introduced literacy materials and programs without a formal framework or guidelines in place, leading to a lack of implementation, follow-up, and feedback. As a result, under the Education Sector

Reforms Assistance (ESRA) five year program (2002-2007) and the Curriculum Wing, Ministry of Education, foundations of the first National Guidelines for Youth and Adult Literacy began in 2003 with formal guidelines being approved in 2005. Using these guidelines to address the need for a curriculum framework and a literate environment conducive for development of literacy (basic literacy, functional literacy, and income generating skills) that certifies the learners as “literate” (p. 13), the National Literacy Curriculum started formulating in 2006 and was approved in 2007 by the Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan. The curriculum was targeted at the out of school population aged ten years and above, and girls and women since these two groups are the most neglected with regards to literacy and formal schooling (Ministry of Education, UNESCO & ESRA, 2007).

The targeted population of this curriculum was children, youth aged ten and above, with a particular focus on women and girls. The document does not indicate that these stakeholders including teachers and principals had any participation in the formulation of the curriculum. The document specifically states that a steering committee composed of different governmental bodies and United Nations offices responsible for literacy in the country and one university (Allam Iqbal Open University) was made in charge of drafting the curriculum. This draft was shared with other university education departments, provincial/state representatives, other governmental and non-governmental organizations who were working on adult literacy in the respective provinces. Supposedly, provincial representatives asked for input and feedback from “people working at the grass root level” (p. 10). Who were these people at the grass root level:

district education officers, policy makers at local level, political leaders of the local areas for whom the curriculum was not even intended for? What can be assumed about the process and content of this curriculum? Yet another piece of document filled with bureaucratic interests, without any consideration for the needs and interests of the children, youth, adults, girls, and women which the curriculum set out to target. My aim is to understand the perspectives of girls and women, those who attend school and those who do not, so that the curriculum guidelines I design truly represent what girls and women value and want to learn, leading to self-consciousness and a sense of awareness about their role and status in the society so that they are respected and honored for who they are and what they bring to the society.

The curriculum explicitly focuses on basic literacy, functional literacy, and income generating skills. Basic literacy includes: reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Functional literacy includes: life skills, awareness of gender equality, citizenship, social and religious ethics, values and norms. Income generating skills include: occupational knowledge, trades, and other skills needed to acquire a craft or vocation necessary to improve the economic conditions of the person and eventually the country. It is paradoxical that this curriculum aims to instill gender equality juxtaposed with embedding deeply rooted social values and norms. Social values and norms in Pakistani society, particularly for women and girls in rural areas were explained in chapter 3. These norms impose honor on a woman where she is the responsibility of a man, not an equal counterpart, and should follow certain ethics, behavior, and attitude in order to be accepted as a woman. This national curriculum would make girls and women more

susceptible and vulnerable to patriarchy, prejudice, and discrimination rather than a source of freeing them from such norms and traditions that dictate their lives today.

National Curriculum for Literacy offers thematic guidelines that must be addressed in the literacy textbooks, materials, and other resources developed by various governmental and non-governmental organizations in Pakistan. These themes include: Islamic education and teachings, values and attitude, ethics, rights and responsibilities, environment and its protection, health and nutrition, mother and child care, road safety, disaster management, life skills (conflict resolution, decision making etc), technological literacy with special focus on IT (information technology) literacy, and gender equity and social issues.

Closer look at the themes particularly Islamic teachings, values, ethics, and gender equity and social issues, reveals that the curriculum has explicitly avoided addressing issues of major concern for girls and women. There is an explicit focus on the life of Prophet Muhammad as a role model for all Muslims without any discussion or mention of his wives as role models. For example, his wife Ayesha was known as the greatest scholar of Islam after Prophet Muhammad's death, even the male companions of the Prophet would come to her seeking advice. Such moments in the history of Islamic education have been purposely neglected in the curriculum.

Mother and child care themes avoid the topics such as prenatal care and health conditions that exist in rural Pakistan. It has been estimated that more than 80 percent of the births take place at home. Who can deliver? What happens with woman during delivery? What can be done to save a woman's life during labor? These questions raise issues that are very pertinent to girls and women in rural areas. Marriage traditions force

girls to get married at the age of puberty (at the age of 13 or 14). How can a young and vulnerable girl go through prenatal, labor, and postnatal care by herself. Survival issues make it difficult for women to maintain a balanced diet and have the required intake of proteins and calcium that are necessary for both mother and child. For example, most people in Pakistan can only afford to eat meat once or twice a year. My discussions with social and health care workers revealed several cases where girls had no idea of what was going to happen, were brought in on animal carts to the nearest health unit if it was open, or the untrained so called “midwives” were called to their houses for delivery. Many times complications occurred resulting in the death of either mother or child. Several women at different instances shared a common problem with me “my child was lost because of the untrained health worker/midwife.” The lack of resources both at the health unit in rural areas and midwives put the lives of a mother and child at risk. Such issues are vital to be included in the curriculum that I propose for girls who will be mothers at the age of puberty.

Gender equality, social issues, ethics, values, rights, and responsibilities focus explicitly on understanding what it means to live in a civil society. Socio-cultural issues that do not specifically address gender equality have been included such as basant (a spring festival for flying kites) and israf (overspending; at least 50 percent of Pakistan’s population lies below the poverty line, I am not sure why this concept has been emphasized in the curriculum and what purposes it serves). Major cultural issues such as the concept of honor, honor killings, watta satta system, dowry, girls’ marriages without her will, expectations to work on farmlands and home (more than 80 percent of Pakistani

women work in agriculture [Ikram & Faizunnisa, 2002; Bari & Pal, 2000]), misinterpretations of veiling, laws, rights and ordinances for women in Pakistan's constitution that hinder her rights as a citizen and in Islam, feudal and other patriarchal structures and powers that limit a woman's participation do not appear as important concepts to discuss regarding gender equality in the curriculum.

Recent reports and above stated efforts, programs, and policies initiated by the government, United Nations, and non-governmental organizations regarding literacy and efforts for access to education neither mention nor address its use in increasing literacy across Pakistan. What is the agenda behind these policies, programs, and national curriculum? Who will actually benefit from it? What knowledge will girls be able to acquire from texts that have an underlying interest in increasing illiteracy among the masses? What good have these policies, programs, and curriculum done to the citizens up till now? Political instability and change in governments from democratic to military and vice versa have created even more problems and gaps in the implementation of programs and policies for literacy in Pakistan. Individual efforts may not be an answer but only a step that goes beyond the requirements of research to provide girls with some social action and change. I address how I attempt to provide this later in this chapter where I encounter the curriculum.

History of Girls' Education and Gender Disparities

The imbalances and gender disparities trace its roots to British colonial legacy in pre-independence India, where a woman's socialization and family influence was considered to be closely connected to her education. Education was made accessible to

urban, middle-class women only when the government and the British rulers made sure the material and method of teaching did not threaten the power relations at home and that women were not claiming an equal status as men (Karlekar, 1994). Gender differentiated curriculum with feminine subjects such as hygiene, domestic science, home science, needle work, ideas that schools should prepare girls to adopt traditional roles and become future housewives, and assumptions that girls would not opt for jobs after completing their education were some of the major socialization factors that hampered girls' education across India (Karlekar, 1994; Chanana, 1994; Mayhew, 1926; Siquira, 1939; Huaswirth, 1932; Doren, 1936).

Chanana (1994) identified four major issues for women's education in pre-independence India namely: (1) changes in curriculum; (2) regional or domicile variations; (3) religion; and (4) coeducation. In addition, she identified four main forces for girls and boys education namely: (1) Christian missionaries; (2) social reformers [both Muslim and Hindu]; (3) philanthropists from other countries interested in women's issues and education; and (4) British government. The Catholic school I attended was opened in the 1800s by British Christian missionaries for girls and it still caters to girls from kindergarten through grade 10 or 11. Its reputation is one of elite schools in urban Pakistan with a dual system: the high performing students who pass the merit test can enter middle and high school following the British curriculum (I was one of these privileged girls), those who did not pass the test or chose the "easier" path entered middle and high school following the Pakistani public school curriculum taught in English rather than Urdu. Such schools can be found in major urban cities in Pakistan. Graduates of

these schools often travel abroad for higher education or to elite universities in the country. Muslim and Hindu social reformers and educated men focused on opening schools for girls, as a reaction and resistance to Christian missionaries, whom they thought were making their children Christian. One such school opened in Aligarh, India in 1906 for Muslim girls through the female education section in Mohammad Educational Conference and under the guidance of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, many others were opened in other Muslim majority areas of Punjab, Bengal, Bombay, and Madras (Chanana, 1994). However, the main purpose for girls' education was to prepare her to be a good wife and mother, and an expectation that educated men will prefer educated women as wives. A qualitative study conducted by Derne (1994) on arranged marriages and 49 fathers' concerns about the education of their daughter(s), revealed that girls' education was directly related to the family's middle or upper class status, where the family would have to give more dowry due to the demands of a more educated and higher status boy. Therefore, education for girls, in particular remained mostly a family matter. Muslims schools focused on the Islamic content and Quran, in addition to the British standardized curriculum, while Hindu schools focused on the teachings of Hinduism. Thus, girls' education was primarily confined to urban areas, daughters of educated and elite families, and was privatized in many aspects (Karlekar, 1994).

Regional variations across India were observed for girls' education. This was mainly because the first three Presidencies formed by the British in Madras, Bombay, and Bengal were the only ones to have access to resources for providing girls' education. Later in the 19th century, girls in other regions were provided access to education

(Choksi, 1929). Cousins (1941), identifies that veiling issues in northern India and child marriages in southern India became the main obstacles for girls' education. Even though veiling was mostly a hindrance in Muslim majority areas, Hauswirth (1932) reports that access to girls' education gained tremendously in these areas between 1920 and 1930; Muslim girls' enrollment increased by 53 percent compared to 28 percent for Hindu girls and 9 percent for Christian girls. Similarly, Chanana (1994), reports on government of India's report of girls' enrollment, illustrating in provinces such as Bihar and Orissa, Muslim girls' enrollment increased from 0.9 percent in 1921-22 to 12.2 percent by 1936. She also argues that the absence of indigenous schools such as *madrasahs* and other Islamic schools was a major hindrance towards girls' education in Muslim majority areas. The commissioner of Punjab, in particular reasoned that girl child labor and lack of value and usefulness of her education were justified for many Muslims, who were agriculturalists residing in rural areas (Chanana, 1994). Ahmad (1983) argued that social opposition towards girls' education was extremely strong, thereby forcing social reformers to adopt a neutral role and give in to social practices that hindered girls' education.

Girls' schools required a higher investment similar to the needs of South-Asian families today. Parents preferred to send their girls to schools that were in closer proximity to their homes, hired only women teachers, had hostels/dorms where the distance from homes was greater, and provided some kind of scholarships or incentives. Due to these reasons, the British government allocated and focused little on girls' education; thereby rural areas were totally deprived of girls' schools (Chanana, 1994).

Coeducation was favored and financially supported by the British government, was not acceptable to most parents from a socio-cultural perspective. By the 1930s, almost all schools were coeducational at the elementary level, segregated at the middle and high school levels, and coeducational again in professional colleges and universities. Chanana presents a rigorous report on women's education and its status till independence. She illustrates data from Government of India, stating that for every 100 boys in all educational institutions, there were only 30 girls in 1946-47, just before the partition and independence of India and Pakistan into two separate states. In addition, she further breaks and analyzes the data: for every 100 boys in professional colleges, there were only 7 girls, 12 girls for every 100 boys in universities, 36 girls for every 100 boys in primary/elementary schools, and 14 girls for every 100 boys in high schools. She also points out the drop-out rates were very high among girls (only 16 out of every 100 girls enrolled in grade 1 reached grade 4). This is evidence to the low enrollment and high drop-out rates of girls in schools and higher education just before independence and today, after 62 years the conditions and status of girls' access to education remains the same with a little improvement perhaps but not enough to meet the goals of United Nations 100 percent enrollment and at least 80 percent literacy by 2015.

Pakistan's international commitment to meet EFA and MDG goals by 2015 remain a dream and a challenge, as gender disparities among school systems, curriculum, and location increase every year. As mentioned in chapter 2, the divide between public and private school structures, facilities, teachers, and assessment systems has been increasing since 1947, which may widen based upon the location of the public or private

school (urban vs. rural or elite vs. low cost). Another disparity that has been continuously seen lies in the curriculum and language (medium of instruction): private elite, public, and madaris. It is apparent that this divide breeds norms, tradition, morals, and values accordingly and the poorest are subject to a curriculum that alienates them. Male and female literacy rates depict the gender divide in education. Gender Parity Index (GPI) has been used globally and nationally to explain the educational imbalance between boys and girls. GPI indicates the ratio of female to male. Thus, a GPI of 1 indicates parity/equality between the genders; a GPI above or below 1 indicates a disparity in favor of one gender over the other. Table 5 shows a trend in literacy for both genders with GPI for Pakistan from 1951 to 1998 (Ministry of Education, 2008; UNESCO, 2008; Lynd, 2007).

Table 5: Literacy trends and Gender Parity Index (GPI)

Year	Male Literacy (%)	Female Literacy (%)	Total Literacy (%)	GPI
1981	35	16	26.2	0.46
1991	46.4	24.3	36	0.52
2001	58	32	45	0.55
2005	65	42	54	0.64
2006-07	67	45	56	0.67

It can be observed that even though GPI has been increasing, in favor of girls, there is still an extreme gender gap that needs to be eliminated if gender equity has to be achieved by 2015. Lynd (2007), while assessing Pakistan's national education census of 2005, indicates that at the primary level, GPI is almost 0.76, still in favor of boys. This GPI at primary level is lowest among all the countries that have pledged United Nations MDGs (Lynd, 2007). In addition, there is overwhelming difference in enrollment, literacy, and

drop-out rates between urban and rural communities, which is further complicated by gender; less girls than boys attend schools. Figure 2 adapted from Ministry of Education (2008) and Ikram and Faizunnisa (2002) illustrates these disparities.

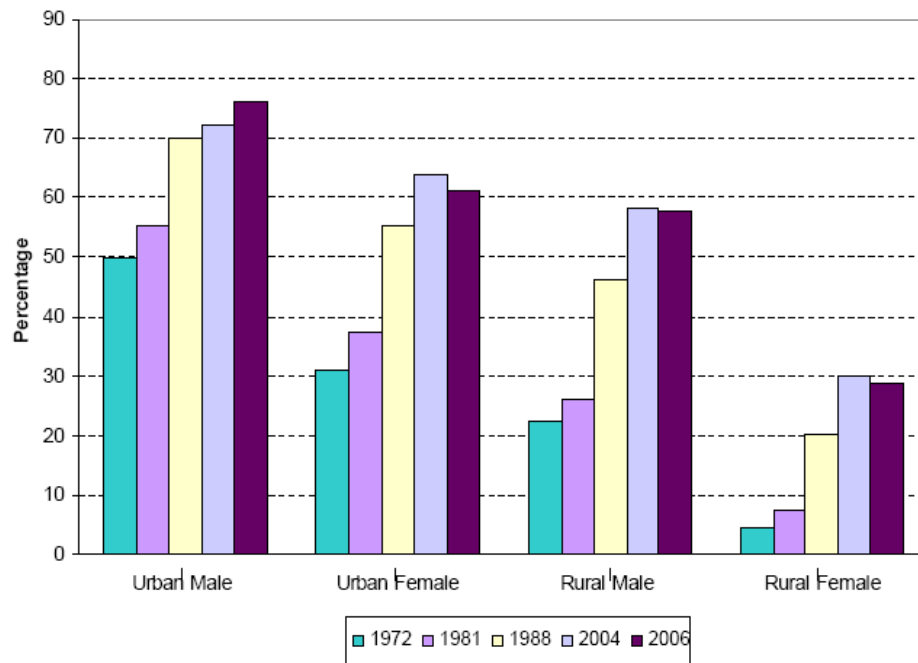


Figure 2: Rural-urban disparity and gender gap from 1972-2006

Since almost 68 percent of Pakistan's population is rural, the situation becomes even more challenging with girls and women being underrepresented in the education system and schools today.

Ministry of Education (2009), AEPAM (2009), and Iqbal (2004) indicate that the persistent gender and urban-rural disparities intensify in certain provinces and areas of Pakistan. Based upon the 1998 census of Pakistan, Iqbal categorizes literacy into four regions across Pakistan. These regions include: (1) region of very low literacy (RVLL)

having a literacy rate up to 29.96 percent; (2) region of low literacy (RLL) having a literacy rate from 29.94 percent to 43.92 percent; (3) region of high literacy (RHL) having a literacy rate from 43.92 percent to 57.90 percent; and (4) region of very high literacy (RVHL) having a literacy rate of more than 57.90 percent. He further articulates that more than 80 percent of Pakistan's districts lie in the regions of very low and low literacy with only a handful (7 districts) in the high and very high literacy regions. In addition, 3 districts out of 34 in Punjab, 6 out of 21 in Sindh, 9 out of 24 in N.W.F.P. and almost the whole of Balochistan lie in the region of very low literacy rate, having a literacy rate of 29.96 percent. The Punjab province regions belong to the Saraiki (regional language) belt in Southern Punjab. If the total literacy rate of this region is 30 percent, it can be assumed that women and girls probably only contribute 5-10 percent of the region's literacy rate. The farmlands and school in the Saraiki belt were my research site, where a dire need for creating literacy awareness and consciousness has been indicated by the data above.

Analysis of population census of 1998 by Ikram and Faizunnisa (2002) highlighted the reasons of low enrollment for both genders. These included: parents' permission, expenditure, distance from home, value of education, help at home and work, willingness of the child, and other cultural issues. Figure 3 depicts these reasons, where girls can be observed to have the greatest disadvantage with regards to receiving an education.

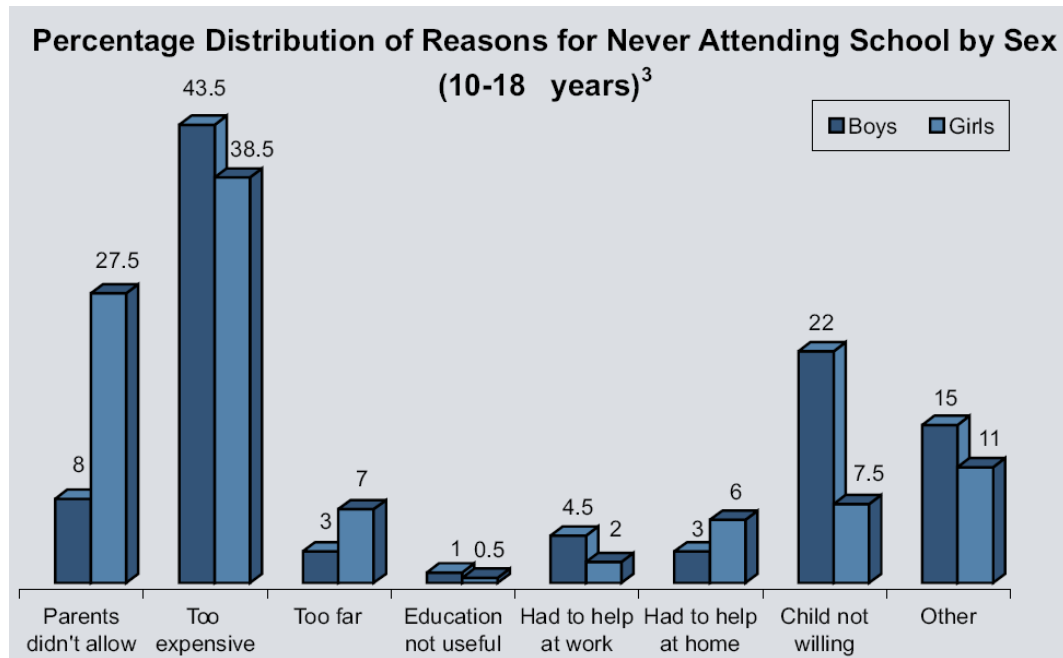


Figure 3: Reasons for not attending school by gender (Ikram & Faizunnisa, 2002)

Despite the improvements and efforts provided by international agencies and the government, it is apparent that the disadvantage faced by girls becomes multiplied if the student happens to be a resident of a low literacy province or region.

Domesticity, Home, and Family Literacy Practices

Islam lays a clear foundation on the treatment of women in the house. Domestic violence and abuse, particularly in rural Pakistan is against Islamic principles and teachings. At various occasions Prophet Muhammad has addressed all Muslims “I command you to be kind to women” and “the best of you is the best to his wife”. It has been narrated that “some (women) visited my family complaining about their husbands (beating them). These (husbands) are not the best of you” and “[is it not a shame that] one of you beats his wife like [an unscrupulous person] beats a slave and maybe sleeps with

her at the end of the day” (Riyadh Al-Saliheen, p. 137-140). In another tradition Prophet Muhammad stated, “...How does anyone of you beat his wife as he beats the stallion camel and then he may embrace (sleep with) her?. . .” (Al-Bukhari, 1982, p.42-43). However, cultural practices as explained in chapter 3 have continued to impose pressure and expectations on a woman to behave and live according to norms and be the responsibility of one man: father or brother (before marriage) and husband or son (after marriage). Children learn gender norms, attitudes, authority, inequality, power, and hierarchy in their homes before they get replicated in the classrooms, community, and society at large. What is taught and learned implicitly or explicitly from mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and neighbors to name a few dictate expectations and behaviors that deeply affect a woman’s life choices and eventually her role in the society.

Since more than 60 percent of the girls in Pakistan do not attend schools and at least 50 percent drop out before completing primary education, it is vital to understand what kinds of knowledge and practices are being produced at home. Families are a source of security, belonging, and love for a girl at all times. Before marriage, she is bound to her own family while after marriage; she is bound to her husband’s family and may or may not have a chance to see her own family. Women often told me that we give our daughters away to another family and never hear about how she is doing or being treated. Dowry in most cases is a form of security for a girl after her marriage. Thus, familial relations, love, and care is an important part of a woman’s life at all times, many aspects of which are assumed and internalized, while others taught and learned from a very small

age. Where love, care, and appreciation breed expectations and protection for a girl, she is always fearful of running away from such dependence and constant supervision of her actions. This enforces her to be silent about her affairs at home and submitting to the conditions and norms set for her. Saigol ([b], 1995) argues that “manners, style, form and respectability all discourage middle class women from taking too radical a stand on family issues” and a focus on women’s rights and movements would eventually be detrimental to a woman’s family life (p. 164). Divorce is considered a sin in Pakistani culture and is often the result of a woman trying to fight her silence and submission. A divorced woman is boycotted by society and denied all her rights, while a divorced man usually remarries.

The main purpose of a girl’s life is to get prepared for marriage and reproduction within one year of marriage. She is continuously taught that she is responsible for her husband’s happiness and superiority in the household. Her voice and actions should not in any way reveal the household’s privacy and she should never refuse her husband’s sexual offers. Mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and woman neighbors spend much time preparing the girl for her future life and house. She is taught skills such as sewing, cooking, cleaning, and washing, along with *totkas* (generational remedies) for common problems such as menstrual pain, becoming pregnant, breastfeeding, and other health and household issues. There is a strong focus on magical or superstitious acts and ways to overcome them. These acts mostly deal with husbands, children, or parents-in-law. For example, the husband is too caring of the wife or brutal, desire of a son, health problems with the son, mother-in-law mistreats the wife, or husband only listens to and follows

mother-in-law's wishes and commands are a few that force a woman to seek *taweez* (magical amulets and charms) or go to a religious saints shrine/grave for help. Sometimes mothers and grandmothers give a girl *taweez* for common problems such as those mentioned above in her dowry and is taught that these things will surely occur and that it is a girl's responsibility to make sure her husband is sexually attracted to her and listens to what she says (Saigol [a], 1995). She is often told stories, folks, and tales of woman who were not able to sustain their marriages and eventually went to hell. When such incidents can be found in the area, women often gossip and exaggerate the situation to scare the girl about the husband and his family. Misinterpretations of Islamic teachings and Prophet Muhammad's sayings also create a sense of fear and obligation on a woman to live a very structured and submissive life.

As part of her upbringing, a girl is taught to be submissive, caring, loving, and shy, to speak with a low voice, and always look down. She should guard her chastity at all times and protect herself from societal evils. A girl tries to abide by such norms, behaviors, and expectations as forms of knowledge because these appear to be more practical and real compared to the experiences and learning in school (if she attends school).

Encountering the Literacy Curriculum from a Post-colonial Perspective

Post-colonialism plays a vital role in setting the context for the curriculum. Feminist and postcolonial scholarship provides ways to rethink the dominant power, knowledge production, the historical context of our existence, and the micro and macro issues in today's global society (Anzaldú, 1987; Bhabha, 1994). According to Brady and

Dentith (2001), pedagogies that are informed by postcolonialism, postmodernism, and feminism aide the interrogation and deconstruction of dominant forces such as colonization and how these shape our identities and cultures, realizing that these are fluid and hybrid and not static and fixed. Hooks (1994) argues that bringing theory to practice is vital for wounds of racism, sexism, and colonization to heal and transform both intellectually and spiritually. She explains this through her own experience (hooks, 1994):

I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me... I saw in theory then a location for healing. (p. 59)

At another point she states that colonization makes one “wordless” (hooks, 1990, p. 216), silencing one’s capacity to voice their thoughts and experiences. Freire (1973) explains that through the praxis of “conscientization”, the colonized can voice their experiences and thoughts. However, do the people, particularly women, living in postcolonial societies know that they still have deeply sowed seeds of colonization? Are they aware of traditions and customs practiced as a result of colonialism? Who will make them realize and recognize these practices and would they be able to overcome them? Listening to the voices of silenced women may explain the contradictions between the colonized and colonizer. According to Mohanty (2003), “critical reflections on their everyday lives as poor women of color [living in Third World] that allows the kind of analysis of the power structure that has led to the many victories in environmental racism struggles. Herein lies a lesson for feminist analysis” (p. 232). She claims that 70 percent of the poorest in the

world including refugees and 80 percent of the displaced in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are women and girls, who perform two-thirds of the world's work by only being paid one-tenth of the world's income, and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property. She further states that these women and girls have been made invisible and have been "written out of national and international economic calculations" (p. 233), and bear the brunt of colonization and capitalism. Thus by focusing on the experiences and struggles of women and girls in rural area, those that are the most exploited by wars, governmental policies and laws, militarization, dictatorships, privatization, unpaid work, and domestic violence, which is the purpose of my study, Mohanty says we can understand and shed light on the "macropolitics of global restructuring" (p. 233), with a conceptualization of social justice and equity.

Born and brought up in post-colonial Pakistan, one can still trace the roots of different traditions, customs, and values instilled by colonialism on the culture of the country. Knowledge, its transmission, and formal education as explained in chapter 2 has been and continues to be taught, and tested the way it was proposed by the colonizers. Since such a knowledge system suited the interests of colonial hegemony, Pakistan's leaders adopted the same system to enforce their own authoritarian control over newly migrated people. Many questions arise about the nature of knowledge itself: whose knowledge is it and who does it seek to benefit? What is the purpose of this knowledge? Does this knowledge include the voices of those it seeks to control and have power over? The National Curriculum for Literacy is but one example of the way knowledge of the ruling elite and bureaucracy is imposed on the masses and how the former fulfils its

needs on controlling the latter. Political interests are shadowed in textbooks and other forms of curriculum taught in the public schools. The major concern here is for students who attend public schools since they form the majority of the student population. These students also belong to the also poor/working class and rural areas of Pakistan.

Curriculum content, subject-matter, textbooks are fragmented, divided into categories with clear boundaries, structure and hierarchy. Children are prepared to recognize this hierarchy and hence form judgments about the “other” based on gender, class, religion, ethnicity (most often *baradree* [tribe]), domicile (urban vs. rural), and language (Urdu, English, vernacular languages). Thus, a male, upper-class, Muslim, Rajput, who speaks English would be considered superior or higher in status than a female, working-class, Muslim/Christian, Jat/Deendar, who speaks Saraiki. Saigol ([c], 1995), argues that curriculum is a political space, where the knowledge of the groups possessing political power controls the content and text taught in schools. In addition, she states that “curriculum classifications (categories and subjects) themselves serve to accommodate and habituate the child to the idea of rupture and separation distance and division, self and other” (p. 51). Even though, Pakistani schools tend to demarcate subject-matter and disciplines from elementary school, rigid curriculum categories such as arts, humanities, and science label a child from high school. Thus, a track or path that is determined in high school is what a child is destined to pursue later on in her/his life as well. Girls, who do end up in high school are in most cases, convinced by parents and teachers to take up arts or humanities so that they can perform better because a higher-

secondary school certificate in such subjects would not get them a job, but would guarantee that they have been schooled and can marry a middle-class educated man.

What happens inside a classroom is yet another form of knowledge production and school literacy that is controlled and dictated by the teacher. As it appears, curriculum and textbooks are vested with political interests, and a teacher who lacks training and expertise, seems to have little concern about making the text enjoyable and having the luxury to read the text in multiple ways as suggested by Apple (1990). Thus, textbooks are considered as the be all and end all to the written information and influence on students' lives. My husband often recalls how he used to be punished and beaten with sticks when he questioned the information in textbooks and whenever he used a different method to solve a math problem. Such incidents often occur with students who challenge their teachers or textbooks in schools. Therefore, students and teachers (trained through the same educational system) are in essence asked to follow the textbooks blindly as if it were a holy scripture because any deviation would result in their failure on standardized testing, and such failure is equal to being labeled as dumb, weak, and incapable of performing well in everyday life.

I have chosen Freire's critical literacy pedagogy, and feminist pedagogy to provide the theoretical framework for the literacy curriculum guidelines. These pedagogies, even though are Western and contain aspects that are not applicable in the Pakistani context, nevertheless were chosen, firstly because there is a lack of research in the field of education particularly to provide a framework for such work. Secondly, there were many aspects of the pedagogies that resonated with my experiences and situation in

Pakistan which I discuss later in this chapter. Thirdly, as Freire argued that his pedagogy is not a mathematical formula that can be directly imported to another setting, it has to be adapted to meet the needs of the people. Going from there, I have integrated both approaches with the premises of Islam to provide a better understanding and grasp of the curriculum from a local perspective. Fourthly, I cannot deny the influence of my own subjectivity, positionality, and identity as a female raised in Pakistan's urban city of Karachi, married to a person from Pakistan's rural area, and studying in British and American educational systems on the process of developing these curriculum guidelines. Can I be considered as an insider? How will education and pedagogy impact the girls in rural Pakistan? Narayan (1993) raises similar questions:

“Native” anthropologists, then, are perceived as insiders regardless of their complex backgrounds. The differences between kinds of "native" anthropologists are also obviously passed over. Can a person from an impoverished American minority background who, despite all prejudices, manages to get an education and study her own community be equated with a member of a Third World elite group who, backed by excellent schooling and parental funds, studies anthropology abroad yet returns home for fieldwork among the less privileged? Is it not insensitive to suppress the issue of location, acknowledging that a scholar who chooses an institutional base in the Third World might have a different engagement with Western-based theories, books, political stances, and technologies of written production? Is a middle-class white professional researching aspects of her own society also a "native" anthropologist? (p. 677)

As mentioned previously, the major factors for low student enrollment in Pakistan are lack of relevant curriculum, gender bias in curriculum, quality teachers and high teacher-student ratio in classes. Furthermore, parents are not considered as important stakeholders of the school leading to a lack of realization of educational value for their children. The chosen pedagogies propose to provide students a creative and collaborative

environment where they can understand themselves, learn to appreciate others and be able to inquire about the injustices around them. Using these pedagogies will help to empower students, understand the dynamics of socio-cultural aspects in their lives, foster a professional culture, and increase parental involvement. This will eventually address democracy and the moral dimension of education by promoting the larger public responsibility of increasing the literacy rate in Pakistan.

Providing students the flexibility and freedom to choose and question as described in the Islamic way of education will help in nurturing the creativity and curiosity of children in classrooms. Moreover, the teacher's role may be redefined from one who is in power and control to one that is accommodative of students' language, gender, culture, values, religion, and ethnicity. This will lead to a more democratic pedagogy based upon the principles and teachings of Islam and supportive of students.

It is important at this point to ask a few questions. What is it that students can really relate to? How can educators use those experiences to enrich learning and foster effective teacher-student relationship? How can different subject matters be linked to provide students a better learning experience? What kind of content or knowledge is applicable to our students?

Children in rural settlements bear tremendous hardship and struggle to survive due to overwhelming demands of their families and system. They invest so many hours of work each day in farmlands so that their parents can get enough to support their family. Furthermore, high expectations from parents, malnutrition, sanitation problems, lack of access to clean water, and poor working conditions make it even more difficult for

them to consider schooling. The goal is to address major concepts such as equity, diversity, and social issues through the content in ways that would be meaningful for the students and also help them in challenging their status in the society. In addition, students will be able to narrate their stories, work collaboratively, respect each other, and find connections between education and real life. Students would be provided hands on activities to make the experience rich and productive.

Paulo Freire's Critical Literacy Pedagogy

Paulo Freire was a critical pedagogy theorist and educator from Brazil, whose work was developed and situated in a time in history: neocolonialism and imperialism. In particular, his pedagogy developed from his work with peasants in Brazil, Chile, and Guinea- Bissau. Freire's pedagogy is centered on students' linguistic and social realities with a focus on dualism: oppressed vs. oppressor and humanization vs. dehumanization. He argues that "Their ideal is to be men; but for them to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity" (Freire, 1971, p. 30). From a feminist perspective, there are two kinds of fundamental issues that may be raised: one the use of the term men, and second, the lack of realization that the oppressed may as a reaction oppress another either consciously or unconsciously. A number of scholars (Chow, 2002; Fanon, 1967; hooks, 1990; Lorde, 1984; Trinh, 1989; Weedon, 1999) have analyzed contradictions between colonizer and colonized, and oppressor and oppressed; arguing that the colonized/oppressed internalize the ways/practices and language of the colonizer/oppressor, in order to survive within extant social structures. As Lorde (1984) suggests about the oppressor within:

for we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures. (p. 123)

In the case of Pakistan, the colonial mindset is deeply embedded and can be witnessed through a number of social mores, practices, and traditions discussed in chapter 3. For example, men often oppress and beat their wives, a recent incident where eight women were buried alive, who wanted to marry men of their choice in Balochistan province, was declared as a tradition and custom by the provincial senate representative; thus such an incident was termed as a social norm and nobody was made accountable for it. Many such cases happen every day in Pakistan where women are exploited and nobody questions the customs.

Freire emphasized the use of dialogue as praxis, reflection and action, and a pedagogical process that enables teachers and students through discussion, entailing a particular theory of knowledge (Roberts, 2000). Knowledge according to Freire is something that “emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry [people] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 2000, p. 72). He was of the opinion that students’ experiences are the major source of knowledge for them and that a teacher should use this notion of pedagogical structure to help them use their own reality as a base of literacy.

Freire’s pedagogy of literacy involves both, reading the word and the world. In other words, he thought that development of critical consciousness (a process known in Portuguese as *conscientização*) was a vital part of literacy allowing people to question their own history and social conditions with the consideration that these people are

subjects and not objects in the creation of a democratic society (a concept that was very new for Brazil at that time). Therefore, focusing on a dialogic exchange between teachers and students, where both learn, reflect, question, reflect, and participate in making sense of the world and the word.

Freire (1996) stressed developing literacy programs and recognized the cultural power dynamics implicit in literacy instruction. Therefore, literacy becomes a tool to transform self-identity and self-definition, and promote cultural transformation by encouraging critical thinking and social critique. Freire (1996) emphasized that literacy programs should enable students to engage in dialogue and social critique through the development of argumentation, and the formulation and expression of ideas, as well as enabling them to decode text and write simple communications.

Freire (2000) focused on the teacher-student relationship with love and compassion as a major component of it.

Dialogue cannot exist.....in the absence of a profound love for the world and for [human beings]....Because love is an act of courage, not fear, love is commitment to other [people]. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause-the cause of liberation. And this commitment because it is [a] loving [one] is dialogical.....Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world-if I do not love love-if I do not love [human beings]-I cannot enter into dialogue. (p. 89)

In addition, Freire (2000) explains that through dialogue the teacher and the student both become learners and teachers, a term he coined as “teacher-student and student-teachers.” He believed the “banking concept of education” reifies the dominant

culture, power, status quo, and control over students' realities, values, knowledge, and experiences; thereby making education "an act of depositing, in which the students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (Freire, 1971, p. 208). This is very true in the case of Pakistan, where teachers, the sole knowledge holders pour down knowledge with an expectation for students to memorize concepts, instead of making the process of inquiry creative, critically conscious, and relevant to students' culture and reality. Freire provided the concept of "problem posing" as a counter to the banking model of education. It is concept that students, particularly in rural areas need for their awareness towards community and social change. He states "as they [students] are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge" (Freire 2000, p. 62). Thus, providing girls the opportunity to discuss their problems and channel it in a way that makes them aware of their status and expectations will remove the drape of ignorance from their minds.

Even though Freire's approach addresses aspects that may help Pakistani public schools, one aspect that the teachers and students will not consider is the love for life to create a dialogical process. Islamic teachings focus on the worldly life as a test for all human beings. Considering this world as an end to everything would be thought of as being ignorant. Islam teaches love for human beings as being part of worshipping Allah (God) and modeling it in classrooms would be helpful in understanding the diversity each student brings with him/herself.

The concept of teacher-student and student-teachers as well as collaboration (among students) can be risky and one that opposes the traditional method of education practiced in Pakistan. It will reduce the control and power a teacher possesses, giving more freedom to students and their learning which could be envisioned as disruptive and chaotic in a classroom environment. Inclusion of this democratic pedagogy needs to be modeled and monitored because the usefulness of this approach may be compromised if teachers are only trained in this concept and not allowed to witness how such a classroom looks like.

Islam focuses on the teaching of worldly as well as religious knowledge as a part of worshipping Allah and recognizing His signs. Focusing only on the student's reality and working-class knowledge would not help address the issue of making curriculum culturally relevant for the students. Even though this aspect is important, it is also necessary to broaden the mindset and perspectives of a child by providing him/her different opportunities to explore the world around him. Even the poorest people in Pakistan have access to television, cable channels, and to some extent the Internet either through their neighborhood, a local café, or in their own homes. Adapting instruction to student's lived experiences as well as more global aspects would help develop the curiosity and creativity of the students rather than only being limited to the information in the textbooks.

As mentioned earlier, the textbooks reflect and adhere to the male figure as more dominant, powerful, and educated. Keeping that in mind, the textbooks present stories, pictures, and scenarios of boys otherizing and alienating the girls. In this context, it is

important that a teacher's realization of the lack of material in textbooks regarding gender especially that of girls would help develop a sense of awareness about the status of a woman in the Pakistani society and the social injustice towards women. Supplementing material and providing girls with examples of women leaders around the world especially Muslim women leaders such as Fatima Jinnah, Benazir Bhutto, Khalida Zia, etc. would elevate and boost the morale of a girl in rural areas in particular. Encouraging students to think critically about the broader social issues that dictate their status in the society would help create a critical pedagogy.

Knowledge has also been explained in the context of the world as well with its notion of being dichotomous. Moreover, this particular view of knowledge relates to power as binary and repressive and a dichotomous view of thinking about the world - oppressor and the oppressed. This notion juxtaposed to Foucault's notion of all knowledge being political and power as "intricately bound to the rules, standards, and styles of reasoning by which individuals speak, think, and act in producing their everyday world....The ways individuals understand and interpret the world act as mechanisms of self-discipline; knowledge constrains and produces options and possibilities" (Popkewitz, 1993, p. 17). Bartlett (2005) based upon the Foucault approach to knowledge explains that social relations "shape" a teacher's and student's knowledge, how they come to know of it, "how it is valued, and how it affects one's conceptions of the possible" (p. 261). This broader perspective of power, oppression, and knowledge would enable a better understanding of critical literacy.

Inquiry and the mode of questioning were promoted at the time of Prophet Muhammad as a form of increasing one's awareness of things around him/her and about the religion itself. Thus knowledge is created through multiple ways, however it is important to understand that in the context of Pakistan, it is linked to the Islamic notion of knowledge creation (worldly and religious). Islam respects diversity and has laid emphasis on this concept. Teachers may use this aspect to include all students with diverse religious background, thus accommodating different perspectives. The textbook version of knowledge creation may be interlinked with the Islamic and two pedagogies to build the base for literacy within the socio-cultural context.

Another important aspect of Freire's pedagogy was generative theme. This concept focuses on the knowledge content that must address the reality that mediates students and their perceptions of that reality. Themes may represent the ideas, values, concepts, and other challenges that are difficult to address otherwise. Thus, in the case of Pakistani students, it would be helpful to integrate this concept of generative themes and create dialogues around issues that students face in the society such as gender norms, their status, expectations, values, and survival to name a few.

Freire's pedagogy, concepts, and ideas can be materialized in Pakistan through reflection, praxis, dialogue, with a clear focus on making the process relevant to students' needs, culture, and reality, thereby providing them the freedom to make choices about their learning.

Feminist Pedagogy

Feminist pedagogy seeks to challenge: claims to universal truth in theory and dominant forms of knowledge and learning, giving voice to the silenced groups in practice. Fisher (2001) explains it as “teaching that engages students in political discussion of gender injustice” (p. 44). She elaborates on this by stating the process challenges dominant power relations, is continuous, collaborative, and one that focuses on women’s concerns, issues, actions, and experiences. Villaverde (2008) describes it as an art that “rests on the ability of both students and teacher to excavate the recurrent patterns of inequity and oppression, as well as the acts of transformation and activism” (p. 123). However, she does argue that feminist pedagogy is like a “drape” that has its premises in many pedagogical and philosophical theories and practices. In particular, she states that critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, and “good” teaching often interweave when “one’s politics guides the ethics” of our teaching (p. 120). According to Shrewsbury(1987), feminist pedagogy is a theory about the process and teaching and learning, where practices, strategies, and evaluations follow specific goals and criteria, making the students responsible and respectful of themselves, others, and content; leading to social action. The idea is to create a “liberatory environment” that is ecological and holistic, making the process of teaching democratic and participatory. Shrewsbury (1993) and Fisher (1981) explain three major concepts that are fundamental to feminist pedagogy namely: empowerment, community, and leadership. Empowerment became a part of feminist pedagogy because of its closer connections with Freire’s work. Empowerment provides feminist pedagogy the capacity, creative energy, and potential

for challenging dominant power and inequity, and keeping the community together. Feminist pedagogy builds a community of learners, where a sense of mutuality helps create energy that is needed to recognize the differences and diversity that students and teachers bring to the classroom. Leadership, the third component of feminist pedagogy embodies the active element of praxis to create a liberatory environment. With shared leadership, vision, responsibility, and respect for others, a classroom can become an agent for providing social change and awareness for students.

Thus fundamental to feminist pedagogy is the concept of collaboration, social change, action, praxis, dialogue, awareness, creating consciousness, being self-reflexive, care, compassion, and critique. It allows for the creating learning spaces, where students and teacher alike feel comfortable to share their issues, experiences, and narrate stories that are at the core of their hearts and ones that perhaps at points challenge or disempower them. Important to consider as mentioned earlier in this chapter is that school literacy is as important as home literacy and what goes on with students in their homes, and farmlands. Will such pedagogy be viable for them? Will they be able to critically think when they are trained to do the opposite? Will they perhaps understand the traditional educational system of Pakistan alienates them and reifies their status in society? How will they take in these ideas and what will they do with it? These are some of the questions that continuously disturb and haunt me.

Similar to the Freirean approach, feminist pedagogy is grounded in the vision of social change and transformation. Weiler (1991) argues for a better approach towards critical and liberatory pedagogy, stating that feminist pedagogy provides a more complex

vision, while also enriching Freire's critical pedagogy. She provides several similarities in the two approaches, also identifying three ways in which feminist pedagogy enhances Freire's pedagogy. The first concern deals with the role and authority of the teacher; the second concern deals with the sources of knowledge and truth in personal experiences feelings; while the third concern raises questions of difference influenced by the postmodernist feminist theories. Culley and Portuges (1985) state that Freire's pedagogy and theory of education is one that comes closest to the approach and concepts of feminist pedagogy and many feminist educators have used Freirean pedagogy. However, central to feminist pedagogy is the question of gender and more recently class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, globalization, postcolonialism, transnationality, which have been addressed in educational theories including Freire's pedagogy (Culley & Portuges, 1985; Mohanty, 2003). In the case of Pakistan, the pedagogical process including curriculum and textbooks reproduce norms, attitudes, and expectations that discriminate, otherize, silence, and objectify girls. Girls tend to absorb and "passively learn" (verbatim) the curriculum content in a way that does not have any personal relevance or significance to their lives, but a mere source of knowledge that reiterates their lower status in the society, not to forget good grades on standardized testing. It is vital to integrate or look at feminist pedagogy with Freire's approach in a postcolonial perspective for the case of Pakistan. This will help create ways for girls to realize the hidden structures of power, authority, and gender bias in the classroom, as well as the conscious and unconscious ways in which knowledge is produced both by the students and teachers. Maher (1985a) argues that personal consciousness created in the classroom can liberate students and bring them

to a level, where they along with the teacher can understand the experiences they bring to the classroom. In other words, teachers and students become “co-investigators in the discovery of knowledge and the frameworks that give it meaning” (Maher, 1985a, p. 35). However, it is critical to recognize that a teacher brings to class her own historical, political, and social (gender, race, ethnicity, language) situation, in addition to her power and authority; thereby making her subjectivity, identity, and positionality “transparent” and not abstract (Spivak, 1988, pg. 271). As Martin and Mohanty (1986) have pointed out:

. . . the claim to a lack of identity or positionality is itself based on privilege, on the refusal to accept responsibility for one's implication in actual historical and social relations, or a denial that personalities exist or that they matter, the denial of one's own personal history and the claim to a total separation from it. (p. 208)

Weiler (1991) argues that Freire’s concept of considering oppression as uniform and that experiences of the oppressed are similar needs to be questioned. She states: “But what if those experiences are divided. What if different truths are discovered in reading the world from different positions” (p. 453)? Maher (1985b), also questions the generalization of the oppressive experience stating “the inclusion of gender issues poses a specific challenge to any unitary notion of the oppressed; namely that oppressed people may not all speak with one voice” (p. 49).

Important to consider is that voices and experiences are made silent by dominant ones. In today’s global and technology oriented society it is easy to observe that people are detached, isolated with a discontinuity between body and the soul. Each girl brings her

own perspective, experiences, and knowledge to class, which a teacher should recognize, acknowledge, and build upon.

Thus, feminist pedagogy strives to regain a creative energy in the classroom that provides for social change, critique, shared leadership, community building, and mutual responsibility. Integrating the concepts of both pedagogies, I will now address the guidelines of my pedagogy for girls in rural Pakistan.

Pedagogy for Social Change, Consciousness, and Compassion

The aim of this pedagogy is to address the needs of girls in rural Pakistan. In addition, it seeks to create awareness and consciousness among girls about the gender norms, inequities, their own role and status in society in comparison with Islamic teachings, particularly those in their textbooks and those practiced at home and on farmlands. With continuous dialogue, discussion, and reflection upon societal issues, customs, and gender privileges, I will aim to put the concepts and theories of feminist and Freirean pedagogies into practice, leading to social change and realization of the affect of patriarchy and dominant knowledge in girls' lives.

Freire's critical literacy pedagogy. There are a number of aspects of Freire's pedagogy that I use for implementing the curriculum with girls. In particular these include:

1. Democratic pedagogy through building student-teacher and teacher-student relationships and collaboration among students through the use of group work.
2. Use of dialogue as praxis, reflection and action throughout the pedagogical process.

3. Use of problem posing and generative theme through narratives and student writings to discuss their problems and issues, thereby making them aware of their status and expectations.
4. Social critique and use of students' lived experiences to challenge status quo and patriarchy in the area.

Feminist pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy, as stated earlier has several characteristic that may be used in conjunction with Freire's approach in the context and case of Pakistan. Some of these characteristics include:

1. Making students responsible and respectful of themselves, others, and content; leading to social action.
2. Providing students a sense of empowerment, community, and shared leadership. Empowerment facilitates the capacity, creative energy, and potential for challenging dominant power and inequity. Feminist pedagogy creates a community of learners, where students are able to recognize diversity. Leadership embodies praxis and reflection to create a liberatory environment.
3. Provide social change through critique, personal and communal consciousness, and self-reflexivity.
4. Create learning spaces, where students and I feel comfortable to share issues, experiences, and narrate stories.

Islamic values and teachings. Role of education and women in Islam was discussed in chapter 3. Building upon the aspects already stated earlier, I seek to include some important components of Islam in the curriculum guidelines. There are several

reasons for including these in the curriculum, particularly for rural girls in Pakistan.

Firstly, Pakistan is an Islamic Republic with 97 percent Muslims. Religion of Islam has been an important part of educational policies, national curriculum standards and textbooks since Pakistan's independence. The military rule under President Zia-ul-Haq (1978-1988) was known as the period of Islamization when amendments were made in the constitution of Pakistan, laws (particularly for women), educational policies, and curriculum standards were reviewed and a greater emphasis on Islamic teachings was laid in all aspects of governance, particularly education. Even though the shift towards so called "secularism" and "western thought" was made in education recently during the period of Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008), Islam still remains a dominant component of the curriculum in Pakistan. Secondly, there is a great divide between women's rights in Islam and socio-cultural customs/traditions that are practiced. It is vital that girls are made aware of and conscious of their rights and role in Islam so that they are able to not only practice them but also understand how patriarchy and dominant culture seeks to ignore those rights, exploit, and abuse their status. Thirdly, Prophet Muhammad in his pedagogy and teaching encouraged inquiry, care, compassion, and reflection. His students along with him were made part of what and how they learned, focusing on their lived experiences and the contextual knowledge each student brought with herself/himself. There was a lot of emphasis on discussion, dialogue, and the use of *halaqas* (study circles, group work/cooperative learning), where students were able to challenge and debate on different aspect with their teachers. Muslim women, particularly wives of Prophet Muhammad have played a significant role in sharing religious

knowledge with his male and female companions. Among his wives have been great scholars and business women. Girls in rural areas need to be made aware of such aspects and women in the Islamic world history that are usually ignored and avoided in Pakistan's curriculum. I remember when I asked the students about any women they have read about, they could only name two or three and what they knew about these women was mostly related to aspects of domesticity, submission, and obedience. Therefore, based on the above arguments, it seems vital for girls to be conscious about Islamic injunctions, understand them, and be able to apply them in their lives accordingly. Girls need to be aware of their rights, particularly in comparison to what is practiced in the name of village culture. The following Islamic teachings and principles would be incorporated in the curriculum:

1. An implicit reflection on the rights of women in Islam
2. Encourage a sense of inquiry, mode of questioning, care, compassion, and reflection, and dialogue about oneself and surroundings.
3. Muslim women role models and an emphasis on the life of Prophet Muhammad and his wives (the practical way of life that demonstrated his treatment towards women in particular). Inclusion of Quranic verses and ahadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) that focus on women's issues and rights.
4. Mother and child care, menstruation, prenatal, labor, and postnatal concepts and their discussion based on Islamic teachings. There are several Quranic verses and *ahadith* that relate to such concepts including

menstruation and stages of a baby inside the womb to name a few.

Discussion about these topics can also address social and cultural problems that women and girls face regarding their health.

5. Major cultural norms such as the concept of honor, honor killings, watta satta system, dowry, girls' marriages without her will, expectations to work on farmlands and home, misinterpretations of veiling, laws, rights and ordinances for women in Pakistan's constitution that hinder her rights as a citizen and in Islam, and feudal and other patriarchal structures and powers that limit a woman's participation.

The pedagogical and instructional process of curriculum implementation entails the above stated characteristics and aspects of the two pedagogies integrated with Islamic principles and teachings. Through shared leadership, responsibility, respect for others, reflection, and a clear understanding of cultural practices in comparison with rights and responsibilities in Islam, a classroom can become an agent for providing social change and awareness for students. There may be a level of risk involved in implementing these characteristics in the classroom, particularly from the viewpoint of principal and teachers. I am hopeful, determined, and dedicated to overcome any challenges and obstacles I face to provide students a chance to experience the implementation of such a curriculum. Following these characteristics, I have designed a sample interdisciplinary theme to use with the girls in the school. Table 6 below illustrates this sample theme on farmlands that incorporates the two pedagogies, Islamic component, and follows the content of the national curriculum set forth by Pakistan's Federal Ministry of Education.

Table 6: Farmland Theme

Subject Matter	Content	Learning Activities	Materials	Assessment
Math	Measurement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Narratives and storytelling about students' lands, crops etc. Sharing lived experiences 2. Activities designed to work in groups and understand the concept such as cutting colored paper in different shapes and sizes and measuring them. 3. Problem solving worksheets to be done individually or in groups. 4. Project to work in groups and be creative in developing a small piece of land, measuring it, and using it to build upon concepts of area, volume, and perimeter. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Worksheets 2. Scissors 3. Colored paper 4. Watering cans 5. Rakes and spades 6. Other materials as needed for other activities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Games in groups 2. Project progress and reports 3. Participation individually and in group activities. 4. Problem solving skills 5. Creativity 6. Worksheets and quiz
	Fractions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Story telling about the division of land among several people. 2. Activities related to fractions such as using fruits and vegetables to demonstrate different kinds of fractions. 3. Building upon the project developed in the measurement concept to understand fractions. 4. Problem solving through different tasks promoting equity among gender. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Worksheets 2. Problem questions 3. Fruits and vegetables 4. Other materials for activities as needed. 	
	Geometry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connecting with the measurement concept. Lands have different shapes, sizes, and angles. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cake 2. Worksheets 3. Other material as 	

		<p>Calculation of area and volume. Appreciation of differences amongst students.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Group activities such as cutting a cake into different shapes and sizes and sharing about the concept of different kinds of angles. Problem solving activities through worksheets and small exercises. Relate to the project and estimate angles. 	needed for activities	
	Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Story telling about how often land is watered, when pipes are opened and closed and for how long. Relating to the concept of time. Students interview parents about the importance of time as related to their work such as for crops sowing, watering, and harvesting. Students write reports. Problems related to time and farmland with an emphasis on promoting equity among gender. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Journals Worksheets Computer games 	
Religion	God and Nature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring nature by visiting farmlands Talking about the existence of God and how we can recognize Him through nature. Encourage questions and critical thinking. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Journal writings Group work Participation
	Cleanliness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Concept around cleanliness being half of faith. Groups brainstorm, write, and share about how we can be clean 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Journals Chart papers for brainstorming in groups. 	

		<p>individually and collectively for the environment.</p> <p>3. Students sharing obstacles to cleanliness based on their experiences. Sharing stories about how Prophets lived and exemplified cleanliness 1400 years ago.</p> <p>4. Concept of ablution before each of the daily five prayers.</p> <p>5. God’s rewards for being clean.</p>	<p>3. Worksheet demonstrating ablution</p>	
	Muslims Leaders	<p>1. Stories of Muslim female leaders in business, education, battlefields, farmland, and houses. Students to work in groups, pick one leader, research on it, and report to the class.</p>	<p>1. Books, magazines, and newspapers on Muslim leaders.</p>	
Art	<p>1. Designing small innovative tools for farming</p> <p>2. Using crops for collage work</p> <p>3. Making scarecrows or creative objects to keep birds away from the fields</p> <p>4. Making small beds and hand fans of date palm leaves.</p>	<p>1. Colored paper, crops such as cotton, wheat, rice etc.</p> <p>2. Sticks, cloth, paint, paint brushes.</p> <p>3. Date palm leaves</p> <p>4. Tool boxes</p>	<p>1. Creativity</p> <p>2. End products</p> <p>3. Ability to cooperate, manage time, and work in groups</p>	

Conclusion

Literacy and enrollment remain the main concerns for educators in Pakistan. The limited educational budget, scarce resources, gender disparities, policies and programs with vested political interests make it even more difficult to increase literacy in Pakistan. International support, particularly through United Nations has poured in millions of dollars for educational reform since Pakistan's independence, yet not much has been achieved in terms of increasing literacy and enrollment for girls. There remains a dire need to understand the culture in the rural areas for any positive effect on the rate of literacy.

Freire's critical literacy and feminist pedagogy integrated with Islamic principles has much potential in attempting to provide girls with a positive outlook and an environment where they can contribute towards their learning, are conscious and aware of their role, and can dialogue and critique the knowledge and structure of power that bound them to live by the norms and culture of the village. Therefore, I aim to address issues of low literacy, enrollment, and cultural norms through the implementation of a curriculum that has characteristics of Freirean and feminist pedagogies integrated with Islamic principles.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

In this chapter, I explain the research strategies for my dissertation, including details of the research site, participants, methods of data collection and analysis.

Research Strategy

Pilot Study

A pilot study for the dissertation was conducted in the summer of 2007. The research strategy for the dissertation is similar to the pilot study, particularly in terms of using the types of qualitative research mentioned in the next section. Please view the documentary at this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mR3w-2VXhI> before proceeding to the next section. It highlights the work done during the pilot study.

Type of Qualitative Study

I use a multi-method approach for my study where a feminist epistemology provides an overarching framework with three specific types of qualitative methodologies namely case study, action research, and narrative research. This case study employs feminist action and narrative research for data collection and analysis. Reinharz (1992) identified several themes in feminist research, some of which include: (1) involving aspects of feminist theory, (2) criticism of non-feminist

scholarship, (3) interdisciplinary, (4) advocating for social change, and (5) representing human diversity. Feminist research has its basis in a particular theory of knowledge or epistemology with its methodology and methods; recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed and eliminating boundaries of privilege that govern production of dominant knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). However, Hesse-Biber (2007) argues that there is no single feminist epistemology or methodology, instead multiple ways or lenses to question, critique, and challenge the dominant forms of knowledge building. Thus, it is not unique, as in my study, to use different methodologies under the feminist framework.

Many scholars have defined feminist research as a research giving voice to women, done by women and for women, relating to women's oppression, and one that often attempts to provide social change (McCormack, 1981; Wilkson, 1986; Wise, 1986). Harding (1987) defines feminist research as being done for women and relating to their perspective about experiences, "the inquirer her/himself must be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subjective matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny" (p. 9).

Feminist research is post-positivist, post-modern, mindful of power hierarchies, and an approach that is interdisciplinary, dealing with experiences and voices of marginalized/oppressed and gender groups. Thus, this approach recognizes the oppressive nature of social structures and attempts to provide social change. According to Lather (1988), feminist research should be "praxis-oriented, critical, empowering, and openly committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more

just society” (p. 578). Anzaldúa (1987) suggests that feminist researchers should develop critical consciousness in order to accept and reject structural inequities and be able to question social conditions.

Since my research primarily involves the study of girls’ and women’s experiences, feminist framework and ideology aides the process, while simultaneously allowing me to question and critique my own role as well as those of my participants in creating awareness for social change in their lives. In addition, it allows me to give voice to the complex, diverse, and multifaceted realities of women and girls in rural areas of Pakistan, thereby recognizing gender inequality, oppression, power, and social structure that dictate the status of women in society.

I use reflexivity, a hallmark in feminist research, as a tool for deconstructing power and knowledge throughout my study. While recognizing the invisible barriers of power and multiple perspectives of my participants, I engage in dialogues and discussions with myself and the participants, questioning my own perspective, agendas and positionality, and being self critical, especially as it relates to my own social, cultural, religious, and political environments. A feminist framework allowed the whole research process to be interactive, reflective, transformative, empowering, and non-hierarchical, allowing both my participants and I to navigate our identities throughout the study.

Case Study. Case study has been established as an interdisciplinary methodology with long and distinguished history. Creswell (1998) describes the case study methodology as a “bounded system” (by time or/and place) overtime

employing multiple sources of data collection. It involves situating the context of the case by paying close attention to the physical, social, historical, and economic aspects related to the case. The case becomes unique through its intrinsic or instrumental characteristic. Intrinsic implies uniqueness due to its study whereas instrumental implies uniqueness in using the case “instrumentally to illustrate the issue(s)” (Creswell, 1998, p. 62). My study encompasses the use of instrumental case study, bounded by place and not time, and explores issues of girls’ access to education, low enrollment and literacy, and forms of literacy practices in girls’ lives at home and school. In addition it sheds light on women’s status/role in the Pakistani society and girls’ identity formation. Later in this section I will describe my choice of research site for the case study and use of multiple sources of data collection.

Feminist Action Research. This method is part of the case study to implement critical literacy curriculum guidelines, while creating a sense of inquiry and critical thinking among girls, with an implicit focus on women’s status, gender inequities, and rights provided to women in Islam. Reinharz (1992) claims that feminist action research has theoretical implications while quoting several scholars in relation to feminist action research: “analysis..... must always accompany action for fundamental social change.” (p. 175) According to Maguire (1996) action researchers seek to “mobilize oppressed people to act in their own behalf” (p. 29). Lykes and Coquillon (2007) define action research/participatory research/participatory action research as seeking to “transform social inequalities” leading to actions that create a socially just and equitable world. Lather (1988)

believes that research can be classified as feminist, only if it is accompanied by or linked to action. I use this method to consciously create a “dialogic, dialectically educative encounter” with my participants so that they are aware of and recognize their role in society, engage in critical thinking, and question the inequities around them (Lather, 1988). Thus, my main aim to create a sense of inquiry that disrupts and exposes the sources and processes of knowledge production, power, hierarchy, and privilege for a better understanding of women’s role/status in the society in the context of broader social structure, relations, and globalization.

Action research has been used since the 1970s in schools to study problems and improve education at various levels (Lykes & Coquillon, 2007). In particular, feminist educators have used a Freirean pedagogical process to raise consciousness about marginalized and oppressed groups including race, gender, and class with possibilities for action and liberatory transformation. Moreover, Lykes and Coquillon (2007) state that since 80% of the food crops in sub-Saharan Africa, India, and Latin America are produced by women, action research has also been used by feminists to explore the experiences of women in the community especially those living in rural areas and working on farmlands. Similar to these action research studies, my study uses Freirean pedagogy to create critical consciousness among girls in schools, women, parents, school personnel, and religious and political leaders.

A challenge described by Lykes and Coquillon (2007) is the language barrier which may at times hinder the “full expression of participants’ voices”. Translations may complicate the research process, and result in a loss of participants’ expressions,

including native language, body language, silences, social values, and cultural framework. Data for my study is gathered in Urdu (Pakistan's national language) and Saraiki (regional language in southern Punjab [state]) languages and then translated into English for purposes of including participants' voices in the form of quotes. In addition, translations tend to lose the essence or meaning of participants' words and expression during the interviews.

Narrative Research. This approach is also part of case study for data collection and analysis. Narrative research is an interdisciplinary research methodology that deals mostly with the collection and analysis of people's life stories, thereby providing meaning to human experience. It is an approach that allows researchers to make sense of other people's lives especially those of women and other marginalized groups, provides meaning to human experience, and gains access to the multiple and competing constructions and perspectives of reality that characterize the social world we live in. For my study, narratives are especially essential because they allow for the authentic presentation of women's experiences, issues, and concerns. By providing voice to silenced groups of women working in farmlands, parents, and girls (people who have often been overlooked in research), I aim to make the visible invisible through their narratives, experiences, and practices.

Riessman (1993) describes five levels of approaching narrative research, in particular the process for representing the storyteller's experiences. These include:

1. Attending: This level refers to how a storyteller reflects, remembers, and recollects the “primary experience”. How he/she makes sense out of it, the context of the experience itself, and his/her selectivity of the experience itself.
2. Telling: The “performance of a personal narrative”. A storyteller sequences and orders the events of the experience in a particular way for the researcher/listener. Riessman (1993) argues that there is a gap between the lived experience and the way it is communicated through language and words because “language is uncommunicative of anything other than itself” (p. 10). Thus meaning is constructed about the storyteller and his/her experience at this level.
3. Transcribing: How the researcher chooses to put words into text/language, “a fixation of action” for his/her own purposes and interpretation (p. 10). Thus it may be selective, incomplete, and partial in representing the storyteller and the experience.
4. Analyzing: The researcher chooses to interpret and represent the experience as snippets or fragments without providing the experience in the storyteller’s own words. Riessman (1993) also discusses Labov’s method of transcription where lines are numbered, words are parsed into clauses, and narrative text is categorized by a function (abstract, orient, action, resolve). Another way for analyzing is to consider a narrative as a poetic structure focusing on the intonations, pitch, pauses, expressions etc.

5. Reading: “There is no master narrative”, thus readers bring another layer of meaning to the experience and the identity of a storyteller. The readers only have the researcher’s version and interpretation of the experience. The meaning and truth constructed by the researcher is specific to the “interpretive community”. Thus “our subjects do not hold still for their portraits” (p. 15).

Both the researcher and the researched bear their own “cultural frameworks of meaning” (Casey, 1996, 1993) that inform the process of storytelling as well as the story itself. This cultural framework of meaning may be understood to mean expressions of value, representations, assumptions, perspectives, and the social language that is inherent in both the researcher and the storyteller. This aspect of narrative makes it interpretative rather than one that only seeks to look for information in the story. Thus as a researcher, I try to understand where a storyteller is coming from (context), what he/she values, how he/she makes their story meaningful, and how he/she fashions his/her identity. This makes my research process more democratic, where the storyteller is considered as a whole person and not the object of research, and one who speaks in patterned ways.

Research Setting

The research setting is primarily situated in a government girls’ elementary and middle government school located in a rural area (village) in Central Pakistan, province of Punjab. The school caters to students from kindergarten to grade 8, with no school for girls after eighth grade in the village. The nearest government girls’ school offering ninth and tenth grade is approximately 35-40 minutes away; keeping

in my mind that the roads are broken with rough terrain and public transportation, usually buses filled to the roof by men. In addition, the study also considers farmlands in the village as the research setting, where primarily women and girls are employed to work.

The village is located in Multan region with a population of approximately 19,000. It is the oldest village in its district that still has some archaeological remains. It was originally part of the riparian tract of the Sutlej River during the time of the Mughal Emperor Akbar in 15th century. The research site is an agricultural village with an added advantage of the River Sutlej running through it. The produce includes: cotton, wheat, sugarcane, rice, maize, pulses, oil seed, mangoes, dates, other vegetables, and fruits. In 1998, this village contributed to at least 15.3 per cent of the Pakistan's cotton production. It was first ruled by the Joyia family who gave the village its name. Monuments that still exist in the village date back to the 15th and 16th centuries. Figure 4 illustrates the region of the research setting.



Figure 4: Pakistan map illustrating the research site in green oval

Khichis, a Rajput tribe migrated from Beka Nir India settled in the Multan region during the 15th century. Patthan, Khichi and Joyia families gained political power of the region, bought, and cultivated lands after the freedom war of 1857. They are still the majority land owners of the region, particularly the village chosen for research. Political leaders in the village and surrounding towns have always been from these three tribes/families. Many refugees primarily of these tribes also settled in the area after Pakistan's independence in 1947. The inhabitants of the village mainly comprise of old traditional tribes such as the Rajput, Arian, Meera, and Deendar. Thus, most of the traditions and customs in the village are associated with these tribes and the influence of different religions before the partition of Indian sub-continent.

I spoke with a retired union council chairperson of the subdivision, whose jurisdiction included the village, to get a better understanding of the area's history and

significance. He narrated his perspective of the village to me. He was brought up by his maternal grandmother who lived in the village. She often shared stories with him, which he still remembers very vividly as if he just heard them. This experience of listening to his description of my research site was intriguing as well as interesting.

My village is very old, even older than the subdivision and district it lies under today. We know this, because I have seen and witnessed places that are as old as 8th century and also through stories narrated by my grandmother. First of all, date trees you see around here are as old as Muhammad-bin-Qasim's time (711 A.D.) during the time he started trading and when people, especially the lowest caste Hindus, Shudras started accepting Islam. His invasion of the Multan region and the states of Sindh and Punjab was the beginning of the Muslim era in the Indian sub-continent. Wherever Arabs went, they left their trademark, in this case dates. Henna produced by a nearby town J is famous throughout the world as well. My parents and grandparents told us the story of a tree that I saw myself during my youth standing in the middle of the city, close to the boy's elementary school. This tree was famous for punishments. The Hindu Raja (ruler) in the village before and during the time of the British, used to hang people from that tree publicly. People were very scared to see public hangings and this incident is very famous at least with people of my time. The village is very diverse in terms of the people's tribes/ethnicities and languages. We once had Joyia family who ruled and gave this village its name. We have Rajputs, Arain, Deendar, Kamangar, Badi, and many more. Some languages spoken are Urdu, Saraiki, Punjabi, Rangar, and Meeran to name a few. Sometimes we cannot understand what the other person is saying. Except Arians, most of zaats (tribes) are very conservative; most do not allow their girls to receive education.

One of my elderly participants, who still belongs to the village's ruling family narrated his perspective and experience of the black period in the village during 1977.

We are Rajputs and our family had joined Pathan group and ran for Pakistan People's Party (Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's party) in 1977. My father S Khan represented the party in the village. Khichi group, who ran for Muslim League (initially established by Indian Muslims in 1906 and a party that strengthened the cause of Pakistan's independence in 1947) were in the opposition. During the election campaign in 1977, there was a big gathering of people in the village. Khichi family members trespassed and started firing, as a reaction, one of our members shot a member of the Khichi group. Soon thereafter, my two brothers and I were picked up by Khichis and put in jail for months. I remember being told that my father received many calls from Khichi representative stating that if my father initiates a dialogue and visits them, he will release the three of us. My father was firm in his principles and said that he will not change his decisions even if he loses his three sons. This period is known as the black period in our village. Everything seemed deserted, nobody came out on the streets because of fear and there was a lot of unrest for at least 6 months.

My elder brother L Khan had influential judges and people he knew, who managed to get him released from jail. He was the first one to come out. To make the case equal and rest, my brother killed his father-in-law (even though nobody today claims that to be true) and things settled between the two groups. My father got elected as the union council chairperson just before the 1977 martial law imposed by Zia-ul-Haq. For years to follow until today, union council presidents have always been elected from our family. This incident is known throughout the region and has been quoted in history books about the area as well. During my brother L Khan's political time in 1970s our family joined the Khichi group and since then we are part of that group.

A system of decision making referred to as the *panchahti nizam or jirga* (tribal assembly or council of elders) is primarily considered as the court of law in the area. When it was formed, this assembly comprised of elders and was very traditional of the tribal system in Pakistan. In North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P), Balochistan, and some parts of Sindh province this assembly is still comprised of elders and serves as a major decision-making system in those provinces. In most parts of Punjab province including Multan region (research site), the assembly of

elders has been changed dramatically. It does not consist of tribal elders, but representatives of the ruling elite. Thus, union council president is elected from this assembly and continues to be a part of it until he remains eligible to be elected. A division of this council/tribal assembly known as *maslahti council* (problem/issue resolution council) is responsible for solving people issues without being complicated by law enforcement agencies and registering a case with the court. Today, Government of Pakistan has recognized *panchahti nizam* and *maslahti council* as councils that can make decisions on cases similar to those in courts. The ruling feudal or political agent establishes and maintains law and order in the region with the help of this assembly and council. These assemblies continue to exist and exercise power and oppress the people of the area particularly women. On the other hand, every *baradari* (tribe) has, since the time of the British, maintained an assembly of elders for resolving issues related only to their tribe. Some of the issues include: division/distribution of property among heirs (this often excludes women from inheritance because they were given dowry; another un-Islamic myth), marriage issues, family issues, crop production and distribution to name a few.

Until the 1990s, the ruling party's *deera* (courtyard-part of the house) in the village was used as a place where people brought their issues and problems to the ruling party's head or later known as the union council's president. It was big enough to host at least 100 people. There was a continuous supply of food and drink for the people. It is known that people who were hungry came to the *deera* for food supplies as well. There was an accommodation for people, who had traveled great distances

around the area, to stay for a couple of nights till their issues were resolved. Today, the concept of *deera* and welfare has become obsolete in the village. A local man in the village stated the following:

. . . the union council seems to have other things to take care of than the interests of its people. It's not what it was before... a place of refuge for most, we did not have to deal with police and law enforcement, our issues used to get resolved in a somewhat friendly manner.

The parliamentarian or national assembly representative of the district, residing in the vicinity of 20 miles of the village continues to offer his *deera* on every Thursday for people to bring forth their problems and issues. Interesting to note is that the ruling elite exercises more power, control, and authority than the police, judges, or any other law enforcement agency and are at most time able to influence the decision of the latter in situations where a case goes to the police and the court. A women working in the village farmlands commented:

This is how they maintain control over us. We become mere puppets in their hands and people who submit to their orders. They really limit the opportunities we have and are seldom able to resolve our issues now compared to how it was before. I cannot say that the previous time was perfect but at least we could find it worth going to the *deera*.

The school principal told me:

The concept of welfare and social work was very common in the time of X Khan. He laid the foundation for gas, electricity, and phone lines in the village. The village prospered during his time in the 1960s and 70s. He opened up a social welfare school where girls and women could learn handicrafts such as sewing, knitting, cooking, and many more from other experienced women in the village. The school closed in two years when X

Khan declared his second marriage with a teacher from the school. The school was revived by your mother-in-law in the 1977, when she became its first teacher and principal. You see how much the school has grown today. It caters to approximately 400-500 girls in the village; some girls even get a distinction in the district.

Marriages in the village usually occur when girls either attain the age of puberty or have completed eighth grade (for those girls who attend school); the consent in some cases are given when girls are born. A very common phrase in the village that I heard from women and girls was: - گناہ ملتا ہے اگر بیٹی کا سرماں باپ کے گھر میں ایک

دفعہ سے زیادہ دھلے (it is a sin if a girl has her menstruation cycle more than once at her parent's house). Therefore, based upon this un-Islamic custom, girls get married as soon as parents know that their daughter has reached puberty. The dowry system is prevalent in the village to the extent that girls sometimes do not get married because their parents cannot afford dowry. The custom and tradition of dowry has great standing for marriage and recently the bridegroom's family requests for certain items as part of dowry have included house, cars, and other material things. Another important aspect that is considered by the bride's family is explained by a woman. An eighth grade student's mother commented:

Even though I gave my daughter dowry when she got married, one thing I made sure is that her husband's family 'names' a piece of land at least 10 marlas in my daughter's name so she has a secure life. I didn't care how her husband's family arranged for the land. I know that I delayed her marriage by one year till he was able to provide me legal proof of the land with my daughter's name on it and build a house for her as well.

Watta-Satta is very common and customary to the area. It refers to an exchange of brother and sister for example the bride's brother is married to the bridegroom's sister. This is another way parents' find to secure and guarantee mutual rights to each other's families. However, in most cases a disagreement, separation, or divorce between one pair affects the relationship of the other, which is detrimental as it affects and creates multiple problems for the families. "When my brother hits his wife (my husband's sister), my husband also beats me up", stated a woman in the village. Marriages usually take place within tribes. It is considered a sin in most cases to marry outside the tribe. Even though Islam recognizes diversity and denounces any kind of distinction made due to class, ethnicity, and race; the village people continue to follow their customs adopted from pre-partition religions of India.

Selection of Site

My husband was born in a town near the village, and many of his paternal relatives still reside and contribute to the agricultural needs of the village selected as the research site. This study is particularly significant for me because my husband's ancestors and roots can be traced to this village. His father was born in this village and was sent out to enhance his education, something radical on his elder brother's part to support his younger brother's zeal and passion for learning and teaching. He married soon after he completed his high school and teacher certification and both my parents-in-law chose to become teachers, educators, and the first people to open a boy's elementary and middle school in the village in 1968 (later taken up by the government), and the first private school in the state of Punjab for boys and girls in a

nearby town in 1979. My mother-in-law was the pioneer teacher and principal of girls' elementary/middle school, which I chose as my primary research site. By opening schools, they contributed and provided access to education for children in their area. They often share their stories of struggling to break the barriers of gender segregation and difficulties of opening their doors to girls in the town. They have set a tremendous example for educators by creating awareness and giving people the choice to provide their girls a better education and future life. Since they were educated but not necessarily belonged to the upper class, they went against tribal marriage customs and traditions and married their son outside their tribe and family. In addition, my marriage was first of its kind in the area with no dowry and no security measures for the bride (me) in terms of "naming land" or "*watta-satta*".

Another reason for choosing this village and the girl's elementary/middle school was the recommendation provided by the District Education Officer (DEO):

. . . this is one of the best rural girl's schools we have in our district, they have had phenomenal results and the principal, being a local of the area, has shown exemplary instructional leadership qualities. This school has had trouble getting girls to attend school. There are prevalent customs and traditions that hinder the literacy of girls and women in the area. I highly recommend this school for your research.

Challenges to Overcome

After receiving an approval from the IRB (Institutional Review Board) at the university and from the District Education Officer (DEO) in Pakistan, I was satisfied that all hurdles were clear that might prevent me from conducting my study. I visited the DEO upon arrival in Pakistan during the first week of May 2007 (pilot study), so

that she could contact her colleagues about my research interests and working with girls at school. The meeting did not take longer than the time I traveled with my husband and 10 month old daughter in the heat with rugged and broken roads for at least 2 hours. However, she did mention that the school was currently facing a situation, where the principal and teachers were in a conflict and the district office had to get involved to resolve the problem (it is rare for a district office to get involved and provide conflict resolution). She did not mention what exactly happened and how I should deal with it when I enter the school. What was she hiding from me? Would the consequences and aftermath of the conflict affect my work at school? I really wanted to know but, realized that my position and role at this time was very ambiguous and uncertain, after all, I had only come to fulfill the purpose of my research and would eventually return, leaving them to worry about and take care of the mess behind me.

My next course of action was to meet with the district council officer in a town or subdivision near the village, to plan out a schedule for my visits to the school. My father-in-law accompanied me and told the people he knew at the office to take care of me and to see that I meet with the council officer. Fortunately, all principals, belonging to the subdivision, were scheduled for a meeting with her that day and were arriving very soon. I sat in her office and quickly noted subdivision statistics and relevant information that I could gather from the bulletin boards. Every now and then, male *peons* (office-boys/assistants) would come in with registers and papers for her signature. Women with power assume the task of men and oppress people who

work for them. Even though there was a woman in a position of authority in that office, she was seen as a patriarchal figure exercising power over her colleagues, subordinates, and *peons* as people referred to her as *madam*. Half an hour past and the principals arrived, but due to an urgent meeting at the district office, the district council officer had to leave and the principals were extremely frustrated because some of them had to travel for at least one hour to get to the office. Some principals had to take public transportation because apparently this meeting was also called for something requiring immediate attention. Once again, nobody discussed what the meeting was about, yet one of them chose to talk about how difficult it is to ask teachers to come to school in the heat especially when there is nothing to teach. I later found out that annual exams had already culminated in April and thus, teachers and students were free to do whatever they wanted. Teachers had to come in the morning and mark their attendance but, were not obligated to stay after that. The district was responsible for providing teachers with textbooks for the next academic year (textbooks will not arrive until the start of the new academic year) and thus, teachers did not know what to do with children who came to school.

I was excited because I would get a chance to meet with P, the school's principal where I would conduct my study. I explained my research on girls' education in Pakistan, proposed interviews that I would conduct with my participants and curriculum implementation. She seemed very hopeful and stated "I will do everything I can to help you out." From her comments I assumed that I will begin my study the next day but, did not know what lay ahead for me. She inquired more about

the interview process and I explained that it will either be audio or video taped and shared the consent forms with her. There was a blank look on her face as she frowned and wrinkles appeared on her forehead. She stated,

I am from Rajput tribe and as you know in our baradari (tribe), a woman's voice cannot go outside, most of our parents in the school are also Rajputs.

I reassured that only I will listen to the recorded interviews and showed the information regarding the privacy and protection of a participant in the consent form. She said that since her husband lives in another city due to his job, I would have to speak to her brother-in-law. He was the next authority over her life after her husband.

I had another privilege attached to myself, my father-in-law. He knew almost all influential people in the subdivision. Even if he did not know people, they knew him because of his role in opening doors of education to all school aged children in his town. Everybody in the town respected him and tried their best to honor him in every way possible. Thus, when I mentioned to meet P's brother-in-law, my father-in-law, immediately turned the motorcycle towards the high school where P's brother-in-law was the headmaster. The headmaster was not in his office and was visiting the district office two hours away. His assistant having known my father-in-law for a long time, did not want to send him back empty handed so immediately called the headmaster on his cell phone and requested for a time in the evening to meet with us at his residence. We reached his house at 8 pm in the night but, did not find him home. P, the principal of the school was present in the house and we waited for at

least 2 hours before the headmaster returned. In his discussion, he did not mention anything about a woman's voice but, did state that there was "some situation" going on at the school and my visitation may cause the problems between the teachers and principal to worsen. Thus, he would require a signature from the District Executive Officer (head of all district offices) approving my research study at the school.

It took me almost 25 days and traveling to and fro about two hours and spending at least five hours at the district office to get that signature on the piece of paper allowing me to use the government primary girls' school as a site for my research study. This according to the office was an expedited process as the signature may have take months to obtain. The DEO was a friend of my father-in-law's and had worked as a principal in a girls' high school in the town my parents-in-law lived. It was her persistence and help that expedited the bureaucracy of the signature process.

During these 25 days, I was often told why I was wasting my time in waiting for the approval. I could fabricate the data myself or simply interview girls from the town instead of the village and avoid the very hassle of traveling in the heat to the village and working with women and girls. My whole understanding of the process was to get a deeper view of what issues girls and women deal with especially, in terms of education. I knew I had several easier options open. I could essentially fabricate data and no one would know about it, yet I chose to suffer the brunt of bureaucracy to do my research.

Selection of Participants

Selection of participants is a vital step in the research process. Cresswell (2006), Denizen and Lincoln (2003), Casey (1996), and Reissman (1993) explain the importance of purposeful selection of participants for research. This “purposeful” selection is most often considered as researcher bias in qualitative studies. However, positionality, subjectivity, identity, and perspectives of both researcher and participants enrich a study. I use this purposeful selection and my own positionality as ways to learn and provide deeper meaning to my interpretations. Thus, a various groups of participants were considered to provide a wider range of responses and ways to address the important question of girl’s literacy (Casey, 1996). Later in this section, I explain my rationale for selecting my participants and how their participation is important for my study.

Since the pilot study had been conducted in a girl’s elementary/middle school in the village, I use the same research site for my dissertation study. I explained the research process, including implementing curriculum guidelines and interviews, to three teachers, in charge of teaching different subject areas to grades 5-8. All three of them agreed to participate in the study, they seemed very happy to have someone else (me) teach for them. They quickly showed me what the grades were doing in different subject areas and if I wanted to combine grades 5 and 6 into one class and grades 7 and 8 as one. An eighth grade teacher told me:

Please teach as much as you like. We have covered the required syllabus (government curriculum in the form of textbooks), and the girls are ready to revise and should know all their exercises (problems at the end of each chapter) at the tips of their fingers.

I introduced myself to the class. Students who remembered me from the pilot study quickly spread the word that I was visiting from United States of America, now every girl wanted to be in the class that I was in. I explained my research study in as simple words as I could so that girls would be able to understand, research process, curriculum guidelines, and interview process. I stressed the voluntary participation in the study and that they were free to withdraw whenever they chose to. I passed out consent and assent forms and read them out aloud in the class, so that girls know what the process was and what to expect. Girls, who returned the consent and assent forms were considered for the study. There were approximately 53 girls in one class, and 100% of them returned the consent and assent forms. In this case, I picked girls randomly for interview and implemented the curriculum with all of them present. In addition, some of the girls who had participated in the pilot study were contacted and asked about their educational plans, because the school caters to students until 8th grade and these girls graduated from 8th grade in August 2008.

Gender segregation and cultural norms in the village hindered my direct contact with the religious and political leaders for permission to participate in the study. My father-in-law was always present in the village while I conducted my research. He served not only as my informant, but also a person who continued to assure my security in the area. I often told him to leave after dropping me off at the

school and he would say “. . . this is risky, with the kind of ideas and research you have, I do not want people to harm you in any way”. One day he was not able to find me, and every house in the neighborhood knew that I was missing and people were sent looking for me. Even though, I was safe in the school premises with a few girls, I cannot forget the look of worry in his eyes when I found him at the union council president’s house. He contacted and provided an overview of my study to the two religious and one political leader in the neighborhood. Union council president’s cousin A Khan, well known in the area for welfare efforts, and another person who assured my security, assisted in contacting rest of the religious and political leaders for my study. Most of them chose to be interviewed and setup a time to meet me in the *deera* with a few other men, including my father-in-law and A Khan. Prior studies have indicated that religious leaders may play a vital role in creating awareness about educating children, particularly girls, to fathers, thus it seemed relevant for me to consider their perspectives about girls’ education in the village. Political leaders of the community/area have played a significant role in the history of the village, especially regarding the establishment of social welfare school and boys and girls elementary schools, as mentioned in the previous section.

Parents play a key role in deciding whether their children receive education and attend schools or work on farmlands. In this aspect, I considered parents who send their girls to school, and those who do not send their girls to schools because both represent an important perspective in terms of valuing girls’ education. In addition, parents are stakeholders that provide pertinent data and information

regarding students' needs to be fulfilled by the school, government, and the community. Some of these parents were identified by the principal and teachers, while the rest indicated their intent for interview on their child's consent form.

Women in farmlands have borne the brunt of socio-cultural norms and traditions since Pakistan's independence. It is important to provide them voice and listen to their stories of struggle, survival, some making the choice of sending their girls to school while risking their lives, and some using their girls to work and become a source of livelihood.

While interviewing teachers, each of the three warned me about a particular area in the village belonging to the tribe "*Deendar*" (literally means religious people). They stated:

Please do not go in the *deendar* muhalla (neighborhood). Your research is very radical and risky. They will break your camera and similar devices and shut their doors on you. I remember last year when we went to that muhalla asking them to send their 4 year old children, both girls and boys to attend school, an order from the district, they shut their doors on our faces and would not let us even talk to them. We threatened them with police and got a response from a man saying: send the police or anyone of that power and authority and we will not send our children to school, especially girls.

As a result of this pronounced statement by all teachers and later on by the principal as well, I wanted to make sure I visit *deendar* neighborhood and hear their perspectives. I realized that it would not be safe for me to go by myself, so I made arrangements with the union council president's influential workers to accompany me. The area social health worker designated to the *deendar* neighborhood, who was a female, and who had a better understanding of the household conditions

accompanied me as well. I could not take any recording devices with me so I was left with the conventional paper and pen to document everything I heard and observed. Thus, this particular neighborhood became an important consideration for my research, focusing on families that do not send their girls to school.

Number and Type of Participants

A total of 59 research participants were interviewed for the dissertation, including the pilot study. In addition, curriculum guidelines were implemented in a class with approximately 54 girls. Table 7 lists types and number of participants, including the time frames in which the data was collected.

Table 7: Data Collection Timeframe, Number and Type of Research Participants

Data Collection Method	Type of Research Participant	Selection Criteria	Data Collection Timeframe		Total Research Participants
			Pilot Study May-Jul 2007	Dissertation Dec 2008-Mar 2009	
Interview	Girls	Randomly after receipt of consent and assent forms	5 interviews	15 interviews	20
Interview	Women	Working in farmlands	2 interviews	6 interviews	8
Interview	Mothers	Daughters attend school	2 interviews	3 interviews	5
Interview	Father	Daughters attend school	1 interview	2 interviews	3
Interview	Mothers	Daughters do not attend school	2 interviews	5 interviews	7
Interview	Teachers	Teach grades 5-8	2 interviews	3 interviews	5
Interview	Principal		1 interview	1 interview	1
Interview	Religious leaders	Mosque leaders in school's neighborhood. Both young and old	2 interviews	4 interviews	6
Interview	Political leaders	Union Council, parliamentary, and national assembly representatives	1 interview	2 interviews	3
Interview	District Education Officer	In charge of elementary and secondary schools in the district	1 interview	1 interview	1
Total					59

Data Collection Methods

Table 8 illustrates the sources of data for each of the research questions, and methodology.

Table 8: Data Collection Methods

Research questions	Methodology	Forms of data collection
What are some of the socio-cultural norms that hinder a girls' access to education?	Case study Narrative Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Girl's narratives, 2. Parents' and women's narratives 3. Interviews with religious and political leaders, and school personnel 4. Observations of girls, parents, women, and school personnel 5. School documents and archival records 6. Existing socio-cultural and educational literature 7. Photographs and videos
What are the different forms of literacy learned and adapted in their lives?	Case study Narrative Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Observations of girls, mothers, and women 2. Girl's narratives 3. Parents and women's narratives 4. Student artifacts and writings 5. Interviews with school personnel 6. School documents and archival records 7. Photographs and videos
What is the impact of a critical literacy curriculum integrated with Islamic teachings on girls in rural areas of Pakistan?	Feminist Action Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of proposed curriculum guidelines 2. Girl's interviews after curriculum implementation 3. Observation of girls inside class 4. Student artifacts 5. Student writings 6. Photographs and videos

Curriculum

As described in chapter 4, I use Freire's critical literacy pedagogy and feminist pedagogy to provide the theoretical framework for literacy curriculum guidelines in order to address the girls' literacy issues in Pakistani curriculum. I integrate three aspects of the Freirean model namely (1) student-teacher relationship, (2) reflection, student experiences, and student's cultural reality as sources of knowledge, and (3) dialogue as praxis, reflection and action, and a pedagogical process that enables teachers and students through discussion, entailing a particular theory of knowledge (Roberts, 2000). In addition, I use characteristics of feminist pedagogy with Islamic values and teachings to inform the curriculum guidelines for the rural girls in Pakistan. These characteristics include shared leadership, critical thinking and consciousness, self-reflexivity, emphasis on lived experiences, social change, justice, and equity, collaboration, dialogue, awareness, care, and compassion. The Islamic values include (1) moral component entails an implicit reflection on the rights of women in Islam, (2) a sense of inquiry about oneself and surroundings, and (3) Muslim women role models and an emphasis on the life of Prophet Muhammad and his wives, (4) mother and child care and issues related with them, and (5) a comparison between major cultural issues with the Islamic principles and teachings.

I taught and modeled 15 days of lessons (7 days during pilot study and 8 days for dissertation) based on the proposed curriculum guidelines to the participating class students. During teaching, I used feminist action research approach and reflexivity with students to create a dialogic interaction, where girls shared their experiences with gender,

power relations, and other social inequalities at school and home that reflect the broader social issues affecting women in the area. It allowed me to navigate and discuss my own identity with them. In addition, girls were taught key concepts in Science, Math, Islamic Studies, and English language using the two pedagogies.

Students of participating class (between the ages of 9-12) were interviewed twice. Once before the implementation of the curriculum to gain an understanding of their curriculum needs that may be accommodated in the designed curriculum. Girls were interviewed a second time after implementing the curriculum, so they were able to share their experiences (both positive and negative), with proposed modifications for curriculum. These interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes with each student before and after the implementation of the curriculum.

Narrative approach was used in a modified form with girls in a rural elementary school to understand ways in which they develop their literacy at home and at school, how they are treated, and whether education has an impact in their lives, particularly in comparison with those who do not attend school. An interview guide with more than one open-ended question and a few probing questions was used in this case. An interview guide is attached in Appendix B. In a few interviews, a story line was shared with girls (my own experiences starting from childhood onwards), as explained by Riessman (1993) so that they get a better understanding of the process itself.

Based on classroom interactions and interviews with the girls, I was able to identify sources of knowledge production, social relations, and status of girls and women in society. Thus by creating awareness and inquiry about different ideological, social,

political, and cultural processes dictating the lower status of girls and women in the society through pedagogy, I attempt to go beyond the requirements of professional academia to create social change.

One to two hours of interviews each with principal, teachers, district education officer, political and religious leaders were conducted to address a broader and open-ended question regarding the status of girls' education in the area and how village girls' needs can be addressed. A more comprehensive list of questions appears in the interview guide in Appendix B.

One to two hours of interviews with women and parents were done using the narrative approach. They were asked to share their own life stories and their daughters' life stories to understand deeper rooted traditions, customs, and culture that govern the social construction of woman figure in society. Reflexivity was used to share my own experiences with them as participants and I challenged my own positionality in the study. Follow up interviews were conducted with some participants.

Observations were conducted in selective situations such as women's work on farmlands, meetings of council of elders, marriage ceremonies, girls' and parents' life at home, and teachers and principal's roles in school. These observations and reflections were recorded as journal entries.

Interviews and narratives were audio or videotaped depending upon participant's preferences. In addition, photographs and video of the research site including classrooms, school, school neighborhood, farmlands, students' work, participating students, and parents were taken as forms of data collection for case study. Students of participating

class were also asked to write about themselves and draw in some cases. Some topics include: what are some of your dreams, wishes, and, aspirations? What are some of the forms of learning you think occur at home? Do you think you are different from those who do not attend school, if so why or why not? A comparison of the status of women in Islam with their status in the society.

Data Analysis Methods

Case Study

Creswell (1998) describes two primary methods for analyzing data collected for case study: (1) holistic analysis of the whole case, and (2) embedded analysis of a particular aspect of the case. I used the holistic analysis with specific analysis of the issues described above followed by interpretation of those issues (in chapter 6) embedded in a rich and meaningful context of the case. I use, as Creswell states, a detailed view of a few major issues to illustrate the case.

Analysis of qualitative data is an ongoing, back and forth, and a continuous process of interpretation and feedback from the participants. In case of interviews with school personnel, political and religious leaders, I use strategies described by Creswell (1998) and Denzin and Lincoln (2003) for analysis of data. Creswell suggests reading or reviewing all information to gather an overall sense of the data before proceeding with specific strategies. In addition Creswell, Denzin and Lincoln suggest reflecting upon interviews/information, working with words such as metaphors, common ideas, word counts (to discover patterns of ideas), and creating codes of chunks of data to aid the process of classifying or generating themes and visual representations of the data. Coding

is the “heart and soul of whole-text analysis” (free flowing text, Denzin & Lincoln p. 274) forcing the researcher to make judgments about blocks of data. Interpretation is a vital part of qualitative data analysis, in order to make sense of data, form larger meanings of situations and issues, and in my case connecting data to broader societal issues and lessons learned.

Narrative Research

Riessman (2001) describes the study of personal narratives as narrative analysis or a form of case-centered research. I employ different methods for analyzing narratives of girls, women in farmlands, and parents. Some of these include:

1. Riessman’s (1993) five levels of analyzing narratives described earlier namely attending, telling, transcribing, analyzing, and reading.
2. I use the approach described by Casey (1996) for primarily analyzing narratives namely, intertextuality, selectivity, silence, and slippage.

Intertextuality implies comparing and contrasting narrative texts to identify selectivity, slippage, and silences. Since people think and speak in patterned ways, they are selective in ways they narrate their story to the researcher, may intentionally or unintentionally disregard or silence any aspects of their lives that at most times traumatize them, “This self-censorship is evidence of a scar, a violent annihilation of many years in human life, a profound wound in daily experience” (Casey, 1993, p. 13), and may provide different accounts or contradictions of their life leading to a gap or slippage. Slippage can also be found when contradictions occur among texts. In order to identify patterns in

the text, I will focus on repetitions, hesitations, sequences, chronology, participants' choice of vocabulary, expressions/emotions/values, and use of metaphors.

3. Riessman (2002) states the process of identity formation, performance, and positioning through spoken discourse and narratives. She cites the case of three South Indian childless women performing their identity through a dialogic process with the researchers, while narrating their personal narratives. The women narrate their past experiences and perform a particular identity for their audience, namely, researchers. In addition, they situate themselves in social spaces and bring a particular perspective to the study. Riessman describes how these women introduced characters in their stories to perform their identity and positioned themselves in relation to those characters. I use the dialogic process as well as analyze ways in which girls and women position themselves and perform their identity, while narrating their stories to me.

Graphics and Visual Materials

Visual materials such as photography and video/film also referred to as visual sociology have been used primarily in the field of social research and anthropology as research methods and data collection. I used the strategies described by Harper (2003) to analyze visual materials: photographs and videos. I chose to view and capture certain objects/subjects that provide meaningful information for my research site and study. Through his own example of photographing, while bicycling, he explains that

photographers tend to capture things that are usual/normal/taken for granted by cultural insiders, but not obvious to cultural outsiders. The first strategy he describes is empirical, implying that photographs are a “record of the subject at a particular moment” with an evidence of “normative behavior” or “daily occurrences of life” (p. 182). Since I am an outsider to my research site and participants, I captured aspects and moments on camera that helped in describing the social and cultural norms in the village. I employ Harper’s photo elicitation strategy to ask cultural insiders to interpret and provide meaning about the visual materials. It is essential to integrate photography into the research process, particularly mine because it involves field work. I analyze visual materials in the sense of providing more information about the research settings: school and farmlands. In addition to portraying the site and participants, the photographs also contain as Harper suggests some level of my own subjectivity.

Student Writings and Artifacts

As part of curriculum implementation and data collection, I ask students to create artifacts and write on some particular topics related to my research questions and study. I analyze these two forms of data for critical thinking and inquiry. I look at ways to see if girls were able to think more broadly allowing for multiple forms of meaning and interpretations. I ask myself questions, while reading their writings: were they able to somehow question the knowledge they are being taught through these two forms of data? Can they recognize their role in society and how gender plays out in their lives? Were they able to question things in their lives and look at the impact of learning for themselves?

Use of Qualitative Software

I use qualitative software, QSR NVivo 8.0, to transcribe, wherever necessary for quotes in my dissertation, create codes and categories, and generate themes for interviews and narratives. A key feature of the software worth noting is that, it allows for embedding codes and categories within the audio or video interview file without the need for transcription.

Conclusion

My research study in a government girls' elementary/middle school in central Pakistan used three research methods namely case study, narrative research, and feminist action research under the framework of feminist research. In addition, it employed the use of graphics and visual materials to understand the case and the culture in the village. This study was first of its kind in the village and in the district, fulfilling my passion to provide for some kind of social justice and change for girls and women in the area.

CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents analysis and interpretation of my data. I address my research questions stated in chapter 1 to explain my findings. First, I consider my broader question about how educational leaders can address issues of low girls' literacy and enrollment in Pakistan's rural areas. To address this question, I will look at two aspects closely: (1) relationships between low literacy, enrollment, and socio-cultural norms; (2) forms of literacy at home and school that girls learn and adapt to in their lives. In the next section, I explain and explore the impact of the critical literacy curriculum guidelines that I implemented in a rural government girls' elementary/middle school in Central Pakistan.

I explore how literacy is manifested in girls' lives at home and school, how norms breed and continue to exist in the community and society at large, how gender inequities are performed by men and women, and learned by girls, and aspects that still continue to increase the illiteracy rate in Pakistani society. Freire's critical literacy and feminist pedagogy aided the process of creating awareness and critical consciousness among girls and women. It also helped me dialogue with political, educational, and religious leaders about girls' access to education, social norms, and how literacy efforts can be improved for girls in the village. I use critical in the sense of creating consciousness among girls and a recognition and realization of their role, status, and issues in the society.

I used QSR NVivo 8.0 to code video and audio taped interviews and narratives. Using Creswell's (1998) holistic analysis of the case, I analyzed the issues of social and cultural norms and increasing illiteracy in the village. In addition, I used Creswell and Denzin and Lincoln's (2003) concept of coding and generating themes to analyze common themes that appeared in all the interviews. I used Casey's (1996) concepts namely, intertextuality, selectivity, silence, and slippage to analyze women, girls', and parents narratives. Use of metaphors, language, and vocabulary was vital in my case. I could understand the regional language, Saraiki to some extent but there were many words that I would hear but could not understand. My father-in-law would later explain the context of those words to me. I will explain these later in this chapter. Even though I had collected girls' narratives, as part of the curriculum implementation, I used students' writings on different aspects of their lives to look at the impact of the curriculum. After reading their essays, I realized how vital it was for my research. Aspects that students were not able to share with me during their interviews were conveyed and written in their essays and appeared in their artifacts. In the following sections, I explore my research questions through narratives, interviews, observations, student writings, and artifacts.

Understanding Literacy, Enrollment, and their Factors

Feminist pedagogy through a postcolonial perspective provided me a way to engage students in critical dialogue and to make them aware of the dominant forces of power and knowledge production that exist in Pakistani society, particularly in rural settings. Using case study and narrative research approaches as explained in the previous chapter, I was able to explore and closely look at the relationship between low literacy,

enrollment and socio-cultural norms in the rural community. Specifically, I used girls' and women's narratives, interviews with religious, educational, and political leaders, and school personnel, observations, school documents and archival records, existing socio-cultural and educational literature, students' writings, artifacts, photographs, and videos for understanding these relationships. Following are common themes that appeared in all the data.

Social and Cultural Norms

Girls through their narratives, essays, and artifacts communicated the various social and cultural norms and mores that exist in their daily lives. In addition, women's narratives, dialogue with religious, political, and educational leaders, and observations of women and men working in the farmlands revealed many hidden and assumed practices that people are so used to performing that they find it difficult to think about them and realize the effects on their lives. My aim was to create a sense of awareness and realization of such practices through continuous dialogue and discussion with them about such practices and explore them in the class through the curriculum as well.

My data collection spanned spring, summer, and winter seasons. I was able to observe harvesting and planting of different crops such as cotton, tobacco, rice, wheat, sunflower, corn, and dates. I would see women and girls working in the farmlands in both seasons and under severe weather conditions (40°F in winter and 130°F).

I would leave my house every winter morning at 5 pm wrapped up in bundles of clothing and woolen scarves to cover my head and face. Every day, I felt guilty leaving my 2 ½ year old and six month old daughters behind for 12 hours with my mother-in-law.

My father-in-law would keep the motorcycle running as I hopped behind him for the two hour freezing (40°F) journey to the school. It was time for harvesting the *kharif crops* (*autumn*): rice, cotton, and corn and planting the *rabi crops* (*spring*): wheat, tobacco, and sunflower.

As we drove, we passed farmlands on either sides, homeless people living in patched tents, politicians' homes that were considered mansions in the area standing all by themselves, tractors, horse and bull carts, pedestrians, cars, motorcycles, cycles, and public buses. We often saw women and girls working in the fields supervised by men which made me question the deep rooted customs and traditions in the area about the kinds of jobs women do and are responsible for. We would stop by farmlands either on our way or while coming back to talk with the women and girls about their work, how their life was, what they expected from themselves, and their girls' education. We often stayed with them for a few hours talking and doing the jobs they were doing. At a distant, I would see babies and infants left swinging in cloth swings tied to tree branches so that they do not bother their mother's work. I wanted to feel their plight for hunger and thirst, their oppression, and the struggles they go through to survive and provide for their family.

Men's supervision of women's work. "Men can only sleep, supervise, run the tractor, or water the crops," commented a 30 year old woman. This is exactly what I saw men do at the end of the harvesting season after women had weeded the land. Interestingly whenever I stopped to talk to the women, I would first have to get permission from a few men sitting at a distant on "*charpais*" (beds made of woven

ropes), supervising women and girls. Figure 5 illustrates this supervision of men while women make tobacco bundles.



Figure 5: Men supervising women making tobacco bundles

Women were sometimes very cautious of what they spoke and sometimes used to tell me to come on a day when one of those men would not be there so they could talk openly. Thus, at times when men were around to listen to what they were saying, according to Casey (1996) these women were selective in their narratives and performed very differently otherwise (Reisman, 2008). This was an interesting aspect of data collection for me. Even though these men were supervising, they showed a peculiar kind of machoness that seemed abusive, domineering, and very overpowering. Were they so

because of their insecurity, because men did not have the patience to do farmland jobs that women did? They thought they had power to make women work, which to some extent seemed true from this woman's perspective "all they do is watch over our work as if we are working in lieu of a crime as in jails. We have to behave ourselves and be productive otherwise we will surely get beaten and mistreated." Do men have to portray themselves to be patriarchal to make women do their job well? As a feminist I would argue that, and I did with those men, so much so, that two men stopped the ten year old girls from making tobacco bundles and sat down to do it themselves, acknowledging that women should be paid more for all the jobs they do and should be treated well. It was worth looking at men working, they knew exactly how to make tobacco bundles yet refused to do it because of their "ego and arrogance" stated one of them. Later when I used to pass them by, I did see them back in their beds supervising, but never saw those two ten year olds working, instead they were going to school.

Powerless women with power. An elderly woman, approximately 80 years old was picking weeds to prepare the land for ploughing and planting cotton and rice. She was accompanied by her daughters and granddaughters who were all busy weeding the land. When I asked her why men can't do these farmland jobs, I was told in frustration that "مردوں کو ہاتھ و پاؤں نہیں" men do not have hands and feet." This kind of social language and vocabulary was very interesting for me. I thought I had understood what she told me but apparently not. My father-in-law explained the context behind it. This metaphor is often used for people who are good for nothing. Such people do have hands and feet but act

like people with special needs or a handicapped person who is dependent on others for everything. Thus, this woman compared all men to a handicapped person. She meant that men are dependent on women for making their job easy. When another woman heard what I had asked, she answered in astonishment “men do these kinds of jobs”, implying picking berries, cotton, or weeding the vast acres of land bare foot under scorching heat or severe cold with no place to rest under the shade of a tree and a tube well far away to quench their thirst. She later explained that men do not have so much patience and tolerance to pick crops and weeds. It is unthinkable that men will do these kinds of farmland jobs. “It’s us women who have to do all these important, yet intricate and small things.” Figure 6 and 7 show women picking weeds over several acres of land, while Figure 8 illustrates a woman picking cotton.



Figure 6: Women picking weeds



Figure 7: Weed picking and preparing land for ploughing



Figure 8: Picking cotton

Supervising men did acknowledge that “such important jobs such as weeding and picking were not possible without women and girls.” What were they trying to imply by this? Women had power from one perspective but were forced to do such jobs from another perspective. If women had power, I asked them, then why were they being forced to do such jobs? If women decided to group together and stop the so called “help” to the men in farming, what will men do? Men will be powerless, where will they get the beautiful, delicate hands to do the difficult jobs in the farmlands? Will they be forced to raise the price rate for women? “I am not sure if this will ever be possible”, said my 80 year old participant.

Don't you know those feudal lords sitting up there ordering these men to supervise us? As soon as they will find out about our planning to raise the rate, our children will be taken away from us, we will be tortured, and we will be left to starve. We are sad that such men will always exploit us women because of their dirty thinking of keeping us at a level of their feet all the time.

She meant every word of what she said to me with tears in her eyes. With such feelings of despair and hurt, no wonder women remain oppressed even while having the power to turn things around for their betterment.

Women as cheap labor. The following statement from three teachers in the school made it apparent why so many girls dropout of school to work as cheap labor in the farmlands.

Grades 1-6 become empty when its harvesting time and it is very difficult to bring the girls back. So most of the time, we only re-enroll those girls who are good and can get good results in the government examinations. Even though the rest of the girls still remain on our attendance list, for the sake of district rules, they do not attend school regularly, stated three teachers.

When I spoke to girls in these grades, they attested that we have to help our parents, especially their mothers. A few seven year olds told me "even though we told our fathers that we did not want to go the fields, he told us that if we did not, we will be hungry." I felt the need to sympathize, yet felt it necessary to ask these young girls whether they wished to do such jobs at this age. At such a young age, these girls face economic hardships that privileged people like myself could not have even imagined at this age.

I was told that women are paid only 15 cents for picking 2 lbs of berries, sometimes collecting only 2-3 dollars a day, while 10 cents for weeding half an acre of land, and 50 cents for making 10 bundles of tobacco Women who make tobacco bundles

are paid much higher compared to other jobs that women do. This is because of the risk involved in dealing with tobacco. One of the twelve year old girls making tobacco bundles told me: “every other day we are at the health unit. Sometimes we vomit all day, have diarrhea, nausea, and feel very weak. We want to get more money so we have to work in such conditions as well.” Figure 9 shows young girls making tobacco bundles as men sitting on rope beds watch them from a distant.




Figure 9: Girls of ages 12-14 making tobacco bundles by the river side

Women’s hands were numb, dry, tired, very rough, and cracked, with hand lines deeply dug in their hands. I had never seen such hands before in my life. Touching their hands gave me a queer sensation. Some had deep cuts on their hands and arms from cutting the dried sunflower seeds for the oil companies nearby. As I touched the hands of an elderly

woman aged 80, she said politely: “بیٹی (daughter) if we do not work so hard and risk our lives, you will not be able to eat every day, ride that motorcycle, and sit in your house that has gas, electricity, telephone, and other luxuries.” That was a moment of reflexivity for me as I talked to her about my privileges and why I had come to the village. I asked her why she was making her granddaughters work in the fields when they could be going to school and learning. These young girls working with their mothers and grandmothers had a deep interest in school and books but were forced to work due to the poor conditions of the family and traditions that did not allow girls to attend school.

We want to go to school. We often tell our mothers and sometimes beg them to let us go to school, but they always remain silent, we wonder why. What is it that they hide from us? We are not asking them for anything bad for ourselves. Are we?

I explained that, what they were questioning was right and their mother’s silence had some meaning to it too. This silence was louder than words I told them. Mothers started crying as they listened to our discussion. They said

What can we do, where do we get the money for their uniforms, stationery, and how can we let them go alone when we have to come here at sunrise. I wish we could help our daughters but we are desperate to survive and are  dependent on this job.

Whenever we passed them, I would stop for an hour or two and read them books and stories in Urdu on different topics such as Muslim women and men, Pakistani women and men who struggled for the country’s independence, health issues, marital issues, and

other cultural issues that were un-Islamic as discussed in chapters 3 and 4. Even though public schools are now free of cost for those who attend with a stipend of Rs. 200 (\$2) per month for children in grades 6-10, mothers and grandmothers still felt that it was safe and honorable for their girls to work in the farmlands, learn Quran (Holy Book), stitching, and cooking at home and be ready for marriage at the age of 15.

I was challenged and did not know how to respond to the struggles of women in the area. On the one hand, they had to survive, while on the other they thought that schools were important yet were forced not to send their girls to school due to the deep rooted cultural norms, traditions, and customs. What could I do for them? I was faced by enormous stress and frustration where my professional responsibility asked me to help them be educated citizens of the country yet I was not able to respond to their issues of survival. These women and children worked from dawn to dusk and bought essential items for feeding their children as they returned home. At home, they would prepare supper for the family, do other house chores, and get the beds ready for her husband and children to sleep. Even though electricity was provided in the past decade, some houses still do not have any electricity at home, while a few have only one tube light serving the whole house. Refrigerators, fans etc. were a luxury for the people in the village. A rich person in the village might afford such items and often help others with providing ice, cold water etc. to relieve people of the heat during the day.

Patriarchy and the cultural context. Girls openly shared their opinions about what they saw was happening with them and their families and who was forcing them to

live within the boundaries of poverty. Influence of “patriarchy” is clear from the following quote of a girl working in the farmland.

We do not like those wadeeras (feudal lords) and families [tribes such as Rajputs, Khichis and Pathans]. They have so much power to do things but never do anything to help us. Instead they make life miserable for all of us by forcing our parents to work in the farmlands. We do not earn enough so all of us brothers and sisters can go to school.

A seventh grade girl in the school commented: “If the wadeeras wanted they could make our school up to 10th grade, but they do not want us to study and become something.” In my discussion with religious leaders and politicians in the area, I was constantly reminded about a woman’s “lower” status in the society and the fact that nothing can be done about how we function as a society. I addressed issues such as child labor, poverty, and malnutrition that have a direct impact on education and they agreed that without responding to poverty, the issue of education could not be resolved. However, they did not mention anything about poverty, its causes, and how they as leaders can address and potentially help solve such issues.

This is a village; it has its own culture. We do not think that there is a need to change our circumstances and environment. This is how it should be; women should remain silent and submissive, while men maintain their dominancy and control over all things that happen around here. Giving women liberty and equality can cause things to go against our culture and traditions.

These comments made by the local politician did not come as a surprise after what women and girls had mentioned in their narratives. He was very determined and aggressive in the way he said this to me as if these were the final words or verdict nobody

could challenge. I felt a little scared and uncomfortable, not only because of his tone, but also because of his physique, and his guards standing with guns outside the door we were in. This was yet another moment for dialogue and using feminist research to advocate for social change, challenge his dominant way of thinking, critiquing, and questioning status quo and social conditions (Reinharz, 1992; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Lather, 1988); Anzaldúa, 1987). I asked him why women should remain silent, submissive, and be denied their rights of equality. He said,

This is how it has been since the time of my ancestors and it should remain like this. We have to do what our forefathers have done because they were right. I cannot allow my wife to object to anything I say. She should be silent and submissive to all my decisions. After all this is what Islam says too, don't you think so?

I was taken aback by what he said. He was the political representative of the village, if he held such views, what could I expect from a local man? I asked him: Do you think what your forefathers have said and done is the “final truth”? Do you cultivate the same way you did during the time of your forefathers or are you now using tractors, tube wells, fertilizers, pesticides, and other new ways of dealing with issues of farming? I explained the misconceptions about Islamic teachings, but he argued that these were interpretations of Islam by his scholar and those of his forefathers. I was very liberal in my thinking and saying that women have been given many rights such as be polite and kind to your women, listen to her, treat her with love and care not with harshness. Silencing her is not listening to her, and asking her to be submissive is like denying her right to expression and cutting off all her wishes, aspirations, and feelings. You should give her the chance to

talk and express herself; it's unfair to ask her to do everything that you like and the way you like them. She has sacrificed enough by leaving her loved ones and coming to you. May be out of her love for you, she will do things the way you like them to be done, but forcing her to do so is being domineering and controlling. She should be given the freedom to live her life. I paused and then asked him,

If you are not providing rights to your own wife, how can the women in the village expect you to do anything for them? 'You' can change the culture of your own home and this village only if you want to.

He was quite for a moment and said you are the first one who ever spoke like this to me.

I have been visited by many 'white' Americans who came here with funds and donations for our people, but when they spoke to me about freedom and liberty, I used to tell them that keep your America to yourself because you have too many problems for example look at racism there. However, looking at you, dressed up in Islamic dressing, yet so well educated, bravely sitting here and raising these points, it is hard for me to not ponder about what you said and I will read other scholars and see if maybe what you are saying has some meaning to it.

He stood up as he said this. It was time for Friday prayers, and his driver kept the car running outside with air conditioning. I thanked him for his time and asked him for another meeting. He quickly said he was going out of town for meetings for the whole month. I am not sure if he was telling me the truth or if he wanted to avoid such discussion with me.

During my discussion with four different *imams* (religious leaders), I was once again told to let things remain the same in the village. I inquired about giving sermons in

masjids (mosques) about women's rights and encouraging male members of the village to provide those rights to women, I was told the following:

We have never considered that as a possible topic for a sermon. This is a *dehat*(village) and its culture will remain the same . . . men will remain men and women as women.

Incidentally, I asked each *imam* about their own religious education and three of them stated that they were *qari* (a person certified to recite the Quran in a humble and beautiful voice) and not *alim* (religious scholar), hence did not have a complete and deep understanding of the Quran, Islamic teachings, and jurisprudence. One of them was a scholar and a certified teacher for the *madrassah* in the village. Their comments really frustrated me. I asked them why they thought like this and I heard the same answer: "it's the culture in our village and this is how we were brought up." I wondered why I was getting the same answers from these leaders as well. Had they accepted the fact that life has to be like this for everyone, not better, nor worse? Was this ignorance or did they purposely try to create such an environment for everyone. My discussions about women's role in the village did not yield anything good, we had a heated argument about the so called culture, who is creating this and why. However, our discussions always came back to the same thing,

It is we as religious leaders who decide how things are done here. Life, culture and our traditions in the village are the same as that in our houses. We do not want things to be any different from what they are now.

My 4-5 hours of discussions did not even make any difference to their lives, I was hurt and upset; yet did feel rejoiced in at least creating a dialogue with them about social norms.

When I returned to Pakistan in the winter of 2008 and spoke to the same religious leaders again, they had a very different story to tell me. They seemed very excited and enthusiastic when we talked. Each one of them indicated that they delivered many sermons related to women's rights and issues in the village after our discussion a year ago. In addition, they opened their *masjid* doors to women coming to share their problems and asking for solutions through Islamic law, jurisprudence, and Prophet Muhammad's life. I did not believe my ears, tears of joy started to pour, as I asked them to tell me more about what they were doing. They visited each house and asked them to participate in the weekly programs of the *masjids*. Even women and mothers of participating students acknowledged this fact that this was an effort nobody had expected from these religious leaders. *Imam* of the biggest *masjid* commented:

You helped us and showed us that we can do something for our village. Certainly when we read more of the Quranic injunctions and Prophet Muhammad's sayings and actions, we found out that women should be provided their rights, at least they should be informed about them and as leaders it is our duty to request men to treat them with love and care.

Another *imam* stated:

Many people have asked us to change things. The government girls' school principal's daughter did her research here too, but she gave us a paper to fill out and return. Nobody took out the time to talk to us and to discuss things. When you came last year and had a dialogue, we were all very angry to the extent that we thought who is she telling us to think about our culture differently. I can

personally say that you reminded us of our obligation and perhaps ignorance to these matters. It is very rare to see researchers come back and we can see your sincerity to us.

We talked about the programs they were doing: weekly sessions for women and men on different aspects such as marriage, life after marriage, domestic problems, farming issues, and raising children to name a few.

Father's authoritarian role. A distinct connection was made between girls' education and father's unwillingness towards sending girls to school. 50% students wrote that

“میں روزانہ اپنے والد سے ضد کر کے اسکول آتی ہوں, I force my father every day to send me to

school.” Many also wrote that they want to show their father that good education can help them stand on their feet and face the challenges of life. In addition, at least 65% mentioned in their narratives that their elder sisters have either not studied or have only studied until 5th grade. Girls in the fields mentioned: “Our fathers do not like us to attend school. It is better if we work in the fields and help our family.” Some of the men in the fields commented:

It is not considered good if our girls go to school or any other place that teaches them anything other than Islam. We do occasionally send our daughters to the masjid so they can learn the Quran.

I questioned why they thought like this, why they considered ‘worldly knowledge’ as something bad, and who were they to chose the knowledge that their girls can be exposed to. All they said was:

Schools teach our girls to be arrogant and then we cannot get them married because they want to find boys who are educated as well, which sometimes did not happen. Therefore, we do not want our girls to be exposed to such knowledge that will make them ‘نافرمان’ disobedient to us.

One of the girls started crying as soon as I asked her to tell me the story of her life. I asked her what happened and she said “my mother was going to commit suicide today.” I asked her why and she stated:

Every day when I come to school, my father beats my mother up for sending me to school. I am the eldest in my family and the only one who goes to school. May be after 7th grade, I will not be able to study and get married. My father says there is no point in studying when girls have to take care of the house and do farming like my mother. Education will not make me any better, instead it will make me arrogant and I will want to go away. I argue with my father that I am not going to school to get a job; I am going because I want to learn and become literate. Whenever I say such things, I get beaten and one time my father burned me on my arm here (showed her right arm to me) with red hot burning wood, so I would learn a lesson of not saying anything like this to him again.

It was so hard for me to control my tears as she talked. She quickly hugged me and looked at me with an expectation . . . Even though there was a power differential involved between us; neither she nor I hesitated in comforting each other about what she had just said. My role as a researcher did not allow me to do this; yet I had to be ethical and caring towards my participants. I told her, there is give and take in everything, but you should be focused on your goals and ambitions. I understand that you want to study till 8th grade at least. Take care of your mother because she is bearing the brunt of sending you to school. Once you have studied, you can teach your siblings. You will be

their source of encouragement and support. Be confident about yourself and never lose hope. I know it is hard to be silent and look at the abusive behavior of your father. He is saying and doing these things because of the village traditions and customs. Respect your father and show him with your actions that education has a positive impact in your life. If you want to go to school, you have to think about your father's attitude towards you, your mother, and your siblings. Be careful in what you do in the future and how you approach this with your father. Make him happy with everything and I am sure he will let you achieve your goals and wishes. She and I conversed about other aspects of school and home life, which I will relate in the other themes.

There was a clear mention of girls being arrogant if they are sent to school and get secular knowledge. It is fact that when girls attend school, their outlook to some extent is broadened as compared to children who do not. However, it is a custom and norm to consider girls as arrogant and disobedient when they attend school or gain other kinds of secular knowledge. Two-thirds of the girls in the village either attend *madrasahs in the community masajids* or go to an *alima* (female scholar) for learning to recite the Quran and fundamentals of Islamic knowledge.

Son preference. "It is important that we have at least one son to pass on our heritage, educate, and spend money on." This was a very common comment in women's, including mothers' narratives. Interesting to observe was that those women who did have sons were forcing them to attend school and at least graduate with a secondary school certificate.

Many men shared that it is part of village customs to “marry again and have a second wife if the first wife is not able to have a son. This is important so we can have at least one heir. You know Islam allows us to have a second wife.” I explained them the concept of polygamy in Islam. In the Quran, it has been stated to 'marry only one'. The context of this is mentioned in the following verse: “Marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one” (Quran, 4:3). Before Islam came to Arabia, there was no limit for polygamy and men had many wives, some even hundreds. Islam put an upper limit of four wives. Islam gives a man permission to marry two, three or four women, only on the condition that he deals justly with them, which is humanly not possible. In another verse, God says: “You will never be fair and just as between women....” (Quran, 4:129).

It does not state anywhere that you should marry again if your first wife is not able to produce a son, what kind of justice is this, I asked them. Can you treat your wives equally and provide the same for them physically, emotionally, and sexually? I had to be reflexive and dialogue about such social practices that degrade and oppress women. In addition, I explained that inheritance rights are given to both son and daughter in Islam. You can always distribute everything amongst your wife and daughters if you do not have a son. There is no compulsion on you to have a son to be your heir. Prophet Muhammad did not have a living son; he was succeeded by his daughters. This is the justice of Islam, what kind of interpretations are you following, I questioned them? Why are you associating women with your sexual needs only? What does a woman go through when she is married only to produce a son? What if the second wife cannot bear a child

or what if she does not bear a son, will you marry a third and fourth time for this purpose? I felt it necessary to disrupt and displace such traditions and critically bring this issue on the front. Even though their attitudes and thinking continued to be the same, at least I shared my concerns of such practices with them.

Focus on boys' education. At least 70 percent of the girls' narratives indicated that their brothers were literate, educated, had jobs either in the village or have gone to the city, and sometimes help them in their studies. Why was so much attention being paid to boy's education only? So he can be the bread earner of the family. Can a woman not support her family? She can do all those things that a man does. Education does not only guarantee a 'job', it creates a consciousness that helps a person understand and question her/his environment, community, and society. In Pakistan today, many remain unemployed even after a college degree. Perhaps, one of the reasons why at least ninety percent of the students' goals were to become a professional was to undermine the fact that only boys can become professionals with the focus they get on their education compared to that for girls. It is very evident that parents are more interested in spending on their boys for an education instead of a girl. This tradition has been there for centuries and continues to exist in some form or another.

Early marriage, dowry, watta-satta, and reproduction. More than 45 percent of the girls indicated that their parents tell them:

We should stop our studies after 7th or 8th grade and then help in farming or take care of the house, better we should get married and have children.

میں شادی سے ڈرتی ہوں، بہتہ نہیں میرے ساتھ وہاں پر کیا سلوک ہوگا، I am scared to get married, I don't know how I will be treated in the other house.

Early marriages are very common in the village. Girls get married at the age of fourteen or fifteen. Many mothers' narratives indicated, "It is considered a sin in our village if we keep our daughters more than once after she is 'بلغ' reaches puberty." When I later inquired about this social norm, many said that it is good to "get the burden off our shoulder." I asked them what burden? They did not hesitate in saying our daughters. It was sad and disappointing to hear that they considered a girl as a burden to get rid off as soon as possible.

An eighth grade student was getting married. I was told about her marriage the day of the event. Nobody wanted me to talk about her marriage in a way to change the event from taking place. I assume they purposely did not tell me in advance because the marriage was planned a month ago when I later found out. I was asked to get her ready for the event. While putting lipstick on her lips, I asked her quietly "are you happy with this decision." She seemed really nervous and as her eyes filled up with tears, she told me:

It's too late to ask me this question. Why didn't you come before and ask me about it? My parents want me to get married as early as possible. You know that I have not given the annual exams for eighth grade. They consider me a burden just like my elder sister.

I was shattered from inside. What was my own relationship with her and why was I getting her ready and asking her these questions? What do I tell her why I did not ask her this before? I was afraid of the repercussions my question might have for her later on.

The man she was marrying was her 40 year old cousin and she was not even 14 years old.

Her hands trembled as she signed the marriage papers. Why didn't I do anything to help her? I spoke to her parents and husband about it. I argued that she should be provided her right to education. They told me "this is how it happens. This is the future of every girl." I asked them where she will live after her marriage and was told that her husband has made a two room house in the city for her. A city has much better educational facilities compared to the village and she should be allowed to continue her studies. After much deliberation and discussion, "I will make sure about this", her husband reassured me. I often talk to her and ask her about her education and life. She was content to tell me that she recently completed twelfth grade after having delivering a baby boy in December 2009.

Watta-satta system of marriages as explained in chapter 5 is very prevalent in the village as well. Two of the religious leaders when asked what gift they gave their wives on marriage stated: "The mehr (gift) that I gave my wife was watta satta. You know, my sister was married to my wife's brother the same day we got married. I think this was enough for her." I asked them if this was some kind of security for the woman or a way to cause her harm. Was this the only thing they could give their wife, who left everything for them? Religious leaders felt embarrassed when I questioned them about this, but quickly stated that this is yet another social practice that is part of the village culture and very difficult to even change or eliminate. They told me that even politicians in the area have had *watta satta* marriages, indicating that educated, dominant, and rich people do such things too, so there is nothing questionable about this system. My father-in-law later told me that there is little happiness but greater unrest caused by such systems within the

family. He has been involved in settling disputes arising from *watta satta* in the village for at least 20 families, if not more.

Thus, a girl is married early and expected to reproduce “beautiful, white” children within a year of her marriage. Every time I delivered my babies, the second question I was asked was whether she/he was گورا white and خوبصورت beautiful.

Girl’s honor and protection. Girls, particularly those who are unmarried are protected from men’s eyes and evil. The concept of honor as explained in chapter 3 is a social practice that is expected of every girl in the village. Many girls’ narratives and writings indicated: “People look at me with bad eyes and talk ill of me when I walk to school every day, some day when I become something they will be jealous.” When I asked girls about the major reason of not attending school, this is what I was told: “It is not well respected that girls attend schools in our tribe, we need to be covered up and stay in our houses all the time”. There were particular tribes such as *Rajputs* and *Deendar* that did not allow their girls to attend school. A few Rajputs gave permission only in the case if the girl went covered up such that she cannot be recognized by anyone on the streets. I can recall that while I was visiting a few mothers in their homes to collect their narratives, many girls aged 14-18 years and women aged 30-40 years stopped by to provide me their viewpoints on girls’ education. They mentioned that they had come to me with their own willingness, without informing their male heads, and covered up so that no one can recognize them. One of the girls recently married and having completed her bachelor’s degree shared her perspective:

I think girls should be sent to school. Look at me, I did not go anywhere. Instead I am working as a tutor in the academy and supporting my husband. I think that a girl can maintain her honor and also study. This is what I did. However, it is sad that my little sisters are not allowed to study because of this honor thing. It is very hard to endure when men look at you and make mean comments. Sometimes they follow you home and when I ran they used to say 'we will take you away next time'. I do not know how I did it but it was very difficult in this culture.

One of the mothers told me:

You know I sent my first born girl to school but then she became so sharp, she was able to use the cell phone, read, and write. Soon we realized that she was writing and talking to a boy in the village from another tribe that we disliked. She was working a few hours for the school and was able to get some money. We did not have any control on her life and she ran away with the boy. Who knows where she is and what she is doing. After that all of us in our tribe stopped sending our girls to school.

What I gathered from their conversation and viewpoints was that in most cases it's a girl's choice and how she is able to convince her parents for her rights to education. The two incidents happened in the same neighborhood with very similar living conditions.

Deendar tribe and neighborhood was an area where I was not allowed to go initially with my camera and audio devices. I was accompanied by that neighborhood's social worker and the Union council President's male relative, both of whom were accompanied me for security purposes and as informants. I did not take any device with me except a notepad and pen to write down my conversations and observations. The male informant left me with the social worker after realizing that there was no danger for me. My discussions and conversations with women and girls about education seemed very irrelevant to them. Life was very different in their neighborhood. All houses were backed by acres of fields that had rice and cotton growing. Girls and women were not inclined

towards religion, which I thought would be the case. The name *deedar* for their tribe suggested that they are religious people, yet many girls and women told me that they did not know how to pray and perform any of rituals for establishing prayers, a very basic and fundamental responsibility of every Muslim.

There was only one elementary co-educational school in their village area with 150 children, most of them were boys. Many women told me “there is no point is sending girls to school, they can work with us at home and in the fields. In our tribe we do not allow them to attend schools.” I observed many fifteen year girls who were married with at least two children. Everyone seemed to be very content with their lives with no need for any “secular” or “religious” knowledge.

My conversations with an elderly religious leader indicated that social practices and customs are part and parcel of people lives in the *deendar* neighborhood. He also stated, “People here have no idea about their own religious rights and obligations, let alone education for women and girls.” Even though he has delivered several sermons on women’s rights and their responsibilities, yet no one seems to take any of them into consideration. He was the one who helped pioneer the elementary school. In his family, all women had at least earned their Bachelor’s degrees, if not more and many had teacher certifications. He argued that

People here just do not want to know anything. They want to remain ignorant. When Allah asks them what they did in this life on the Day of Judgment, they will say we were ignorant and did not know our responsibilities upon ourselves and other human beings.

It was interesting to observe that many of his comments were true. People were living a very carefree and simple life. All the couples I saw were very young and both worked on the fields with their children.

The social worker lived very close to the *deendar* neighborhood and when I asked her about her own life, she stated:

I got married a few months ago and everyone keeps asking me when I will become pregnant. I found out today that I am pregnant. I hope it's a boy. Even if it's not, I have written in my marriage contract that my husband has to give me Rs. 250,000 (\$3000) if he divorces me. So I am sure that he will not be able to pay me this amount of money and so will not marry another woman to have a boy.

She was very confident about herself and the way she had manipulated the marriage contract. Such extreme measures have to be taken to avoid social practices that degrade a woman.

Woman's voice. Earlier in chapter 5, I mentioned about the difficulty to obtain permission for my research at the school. One of the key reasons as explained by the principal was the issue of a girl/woman's voice. A woman's voice is considered part of her honor and should not go outside her family. I had to considerably convince women and mothers about the confidentiality of the narratives and interviews before I was given permission to record their voices. Many girls in their life stories indicated

We are not allowed to speak or come in front of any male guests that come to our house. Our father gets upset if our voice can be heard in the room, he is sitting in. He says a woman's voice is her honor and indicates her chastity and purity.

Honor and voice have always been associated with a girl's virginity. She needs to be protected at all time and it is the father or brother's responsibility to take care of a woman's honor.

Domesticity. There is a continuous expectation for girls to look after the house, perform all the unpaid household labor without any appreciation of their time and efforts. Many women's narratives mentioned the following: "Women have to do all the things in the house simply because we are women and not men." Students' wrote in their essays about their life and things they do in the house

We have to do the routine work in the house "گھریلو کام کاج", such as cleaning "جھاڑ دینا", preparing food, washing dishes and clothes, ironing, sewing and embroidery, dusting, and other daily house chores. If guests come, our whole day is spent in making food and serving them. Our brothers and other male family members usually go to city for work and return home either on Sundays or on special occasions. So on such days we cannot study or doing anything else but to serve them.

Why aren't women paid for these household chores? Why are women expected to do all the housework? It is not the religion but the culture in the community, society, and in all parts of the world that force her to fulfill this responsibility. It does not matter if one is literate or illiterate, educated or uneducated, rich or poor; this expectation has always existed and there does not seem any way of disassociating women with household chores and rearing children. Even though my husband has not played the traditional male stereotype in the house, there have been times that I have had to take care of many things associated with women in the house.

Value of Education

The condition and access to education for girls in particular depended on whether parents, educational leaders, teachers, politicians, and religious leaders valued education and considered it an a vital part of a girl's life. During my analysis of data, there were moments that made me question how an educated person can think in a manner that deprives girls and women their right to seeking knowledge, keeping aside what kind of knowledge and whose knowledge. In each of the sub-sections below, I quote people who have a direct or indirect influence on girl's education.

Parents. Many girls' narratives indicated that "if my parents do not have a serious attitude about my studies, I will not be able to continue my studies." In addition many parents felt that the tradition of spending on a girl's dowry is better than spending on her education. This is because "dowry is a security for my girl, education is not. Bridegroom's family looks at how much investment we made for the dowry not on the girl's mind/knowledge", stated a father. In her narrative a 36 year old mother of eight children (6 girls and 2 boys) said

It took me more than the lifetime of my daughter to collect her dowry. You know this is the custom. We have to give our daughter something for her security else her husband's family will treat her like a dog.

Therefore, expenditure on a girl's dowry is preferred as compared to her education.

Ninety percent of the girls who were attending school stated and wrote that their mothers were their source of encouragement for going to school. Even though their mothers were illiterate by governmental standards, they felt that their daughters deserve better. "We

want our daughters to seek 'تعليم' knowledge so they can at least help themselves and their children when they grow up." This was a very common statement in many mother's and some father's narratives, whose girls were attending school. I felt these discourses very contradictory, those that Casey (1996) describes as intertextuality. How did these mothers and fathers think differently compared to those working in the fields? Going back to them for clarification indicated that many fathers who had stated this, had educated/literate sisters who had much say in the decision about the schooling of their nieces. In addition, mothers clarified that their unmarried brothers shared the opinion of sending girls to schools and often visited their homes to teach them. This was an interesting cultural aspect of sending girls to schools that could not have been assumed.

Educational leaders and teachers. District Education Officer (DEO), principal, and teachers shared their perspectives on girls' education with me. Neither of them felt that girls should be deprived of schooling and education, yet neither of them stated anything that helped create awareness about increasing the literacy rate of the girls in the district and village. DEO was a role model for women in the district schools and colleges. She was the first woman to be appointed as DEO of schools in the district.

There are many expectations from me and I have to work much harder to prove myself in my job. I have many advantages as well. You know how issues can be delayed or expedited in bureaucracy. I have used my gender on such occasions to my advantage. Consider your own case when you needed permission to conduct your research. If I had not used my gender power at that time, you would still be sitting without a signature.

She mentioned about teacher training programs and the establishment of a new school in the city after much deliberations with the district office. These teacher training programs were not programs per say, they were actually evaluation system that the district had planned to visit schools and observe one class to get a general idea about the performance of the school. The school she told me was a coeducational elementary school that was being used to experiment the teaching of English language from Kindergarten instead of Grade 5.

There were a few individual efforts by two teachers and principal. The principal shared that in the seven member school committee comprised of women from the village, none knew how to write their names approving the minutes of the meeting. For years they would use their thumb prints for this purpose. This year, the principal made each of the seven members capable of at least writing their names. Starting this year, the principal stayed back after 1:30 pm (dismissal time for students) and taught common problems that fifth and eighth grade students were having in their subject areas. She said “this is important so they perform well on the testing since these are the only two grade tested.”

At the beginning of the year, two teachers, native of the village, went to several houses asking them to send their daughters to the village. Even though a district policy mandates them to do this at the beginning of every school year, implementation is at the discretion of the teachers. Other teachers in the school stated “we do not feel compelled to visit each house and feel the burden and pressure of parents.”

Even though all of them shared the need to create awareness about girls’ education and importance of girls attending schools, I felt that teachers, even though

educated themselves, did not appear to be a source of encouragement and support for girls in the village. I am assuming this was because only two of the teachers were native of the village and the rest of the five commuted from the nearby city/town to the school every day.

Political and religious leaders. In my discussion about girls' education with religious leaders and politicians in the area, I was constantly reminded that girls should maintain the lower status they have in the society. When I asked about their own houses and status of their wives from religious leaders, I was told that all of them were illiterate by governmental standards; however they could read the Quran without understanding. I talked about myself, why I was educated. Not because I was born and raised in an urban area, but because both my parents felt that education should be a vital part of my upbringing. There are many girls living in urban areas that do not attend school. Another aspect of my own education was an injunction of following the teachings of Islam. Islam has clearly outlined the rights of women and one of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad is "Acquiring knowledge is a fundamental right of every man and woman, even if you have to go as far as China to attain it." They quickly stated that "it is enough to teach girls to recite the Quran and fundamental concepts of Islam such as oneness of God, prayers, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage." Now who are they to dictate the lives of others in a manner to oppress them and not provide them with the best quality of life and education? Who are they to decide that providing girls with religious knowledge was enough to make them great citizens and married partners? The first thing taught to Adam according to the Quran was the knowledge of the universe. Acquiring knowledge and learning about

one's surroundings is a part of worshipping Allah and in fact bringing one closer to Him as one recognizes the wonders He has provided to His creatures. I somehow felt myself convincing them to do what I thought was the right thing to do... I wanted justice for those women and girls in the village. This was getting frustrating for me... listening to leaders who blatantly denied the reality and need for change in their culture. One of the religious leader, who was educated himself and a teacher, shared that there were many occasions when he wished his wife had attended school because that would drastically change the environment in the house and her dealing with the children.

How can she study now, she is almost 50 years old. She often hit our children because she was upset with me, I feel that this would not have been the case if she was married and had a broader mindset.

It's never too late to start. I told him to start teaching his wife, if he feels ashamed; the principal had offered her instructional services to adult women at her home.

Union Council president and parliament representative of the area were proud that there was a school for the one-third population of girls in the village with only seven teachers. They said "it's important to send girls to schools but we cannot force them to do so." In addition, the Union Council president did not hesitate in saying "the more girls will be educated the more they will become empowered to stand at an equal status with men and we do not want to see that happening." When I asked about school facilities and increasing girls' enrollment, he stated that this has been on his list since the past few years but there is nothing that he can do about it.

It is a great honor that we are facilitating 400 girl students and seven teachers in a five room school with nine grades (kindergarten-eight). Imagine if we could enroll all the girls! The government does not provide us with the resources to deal with the girls' population going to school.

Nevertheless he agreed that girls education was a vital part in the progress of the country, however nobody in the government would be willing to provide a high school or the resources to attend to the needs of girls in the village. He stated that this village had outdated its surrounding villages by offering girls a place to study by cleaning up a junkyard and providing a structure of roof, walls and pillars for the school. The parliament representative was asked about girls' education and his response was:

I cannot convince or stop parents from making their girls work in the fields. Even if schooling becomes mandatory in Pakistan, these cultural bindings and conditions will not change because whether we accept it or not there are economic hardships, and unless we address that we cannot resolve anything.

He also mentioned that the curriculum is the same for rural and urban students. Some of our students in the villages have not even seen a lamp, reading and learning about it is unimaginable for them. Unless we do something about it, our education will not become better. I was glad he acknowledged this but when I asked him if he had done something about it, he stated "this is not my job. I do not want to step on anyone else's shoes."

When I inquired about his own children's education, he was proud to say that he sent them to elite schools in Pakistan and some of them are now preparing to go abroad for higher education. Where was the balance....do good to your own children and let the rest bear the brunt of society and survival? I wanted them to understand that education has greater implications on a child's life, and with education they will be able to navigate

their identity and role in the society, create meaning for themselves, and recognize the social context of things around them. I felt my reasoning and thinking stopped before them as I became speechless.

Physical Facilities

My interviews with school personnel, girl's and women's narratives, and observation indicated the need of proper physical facilities for the school in order to increase enrollment. Distance from the school was one aspect that was vital to all parents and girls. Many girls travel 45 minutes to an hour to reach their school. This was particularly difficult on winter mornings and spring and summer afternoons with severe temperatures. Several women said "it is important to have at least a boundary wall and roof, if not a proper building for the school." The principal stated:

We had very low enrollment of approximately 100 girls before we were able to secure funds and resources to build a boundary wall and some classrooms with roof in 2002. Since 2002 we have increased our enrollment to 400 girls.

In addition, girls and women felt the need of having latrines/restrooms and readily available water supply in the school. This was necessary since girls unlike boys cannot go outside the school facility to use the restroom or drink water. Even though there was a supply of electricity in the school, girls and teachers said that it hardly ever worked. I can attest to this because I could never charge my laptop, video camera, and other devices in the school when needed. Cleanliness was another aspect that was mentioned by girls, teachers, and women for the school facility and neighborhood. A clean and neat school is vital for a learning environment. Open sewage lines running on either side of the unpaved

road leading to the school was a major source of health issues in the village. Even though people were used to the smell of sewage, it was nevertheless breeding bacteria and other germs.

Availability of Resources

Girls' narratives before the implementation of the curriculum, students' writings, and my observations were used to shed light on this aspect. Students freely shared their opinions about the lack of resources in the school. At least 85 percent of the students told me that they did not have things that were needed to make learning interesting such as “اچھا رہنما” good guide/principal, teachers, and things that we can physically see and do.

They felt that teachers were not qualified enough to provide them with a broader perspective and share different teaching materials with them such as magazines, books, other equipment and materials that they could look at and observe such as pictures or physical objects (telescopes, lamps, computers etc.). Girls said, “When we read about tides, sea, oceans in science, we had no idea what they looked like. I wish our teachers were qualified and knowledgeable to somehow show them to us.” One of the sixth grade girls wrote:

It is hard when we are asked to read and imagine how things would look like. We read about lamps. Most of us do not have electricity in our homes, so each one of us can only imagine what it will be like to have a lamp in our room to study.

It is our responsibility as teachers and educators to use different teaching resources besides textbooks to enhance the learning of our students. Certainly, teachers have access

to newspapers and magazines; however if a teacher is not inclined to help students, she will never think of using resources readily available to her in the classroom. In addition, students mentioned that they only read about the experiments in science, how they are performed, and are later tested on it. No efforts have ever been made by the principal and teachers to provide students with equipment and materials to perform the scientific experiments. Many students wrote that they have to study about home economics and memorize the procedures of making different kinds of food, embroidery, and sewing, but never actually have the facility to practice them. In their narratives they mentioned that they have only had the chance to make a sandwich in their classroom during the last week of the school year. “We never had an opportunity to do sewing or embroidery.”

Another form of intertextuality and contradictory discourse appeared in girls’ narratives. Even though girls stated that their school principal was a native of the village who was sensitive to and took care of their needs, they also said that she provided most of her services to teach them a few months before the examinations/testing. In addition, she belonged to the same tribe (Rajput) as the union council’s family and therefore had support of the union council and its president. They thought “she was not a good guide” as a principal, a confidant, friend, and a teacher. According to the girls “our principal even though qualified, never filled in the deficiencies of our teachers in terms of providing us materials other than textbooks to help us.” The principal had a computer in her house but “never focused on obtaining one for the school so we can benefit from it.” Girls wrote that even though Islam is our religion, we still lack in its knowledge in many ways. They thought that Quran and Islamic Studies should be taught by a “اسلامی معلم”

female Islamic scholar or at least a person who has a greater and deeper understanding of Quran, Sunnah (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad), and Fiqh (Islamic law and jurisprudence) because this person will give them thorough knowledge linking it to what they had to do in their textbooks.

“Exercise is so important for our bodies. I think physical education can keep our minds and souls refreshed and active.” Students felt the need of having some extracurricular activities including physical education, art work, painting, and drawing to keep fulfill their bodily and creativity needs. Relay races are conducted in the district once a year and students wrote that there are trials two months before the race and only one or two girls are chosen from the school, defeating the real purpose behind physical education and exercising.

Home and School Environment

As I approached the school every morning, I would see a group of teachers sitting in the school ground enjoying the sunlight and discussing household and school related issues. Since the textbook chapters had been taught by teachers, students were free to do whatever they wanted and teachers were at their liberty to do as they pleased, except to prepare test results and attendance registers for next year. I would find empty classrooms with girls playing in the grounds, drinking water from the small tap well, climbing trees, or helping teachers with making attendance registers. Occasionally there would be one class of approximately 40-50 students squatted on their feet spaced at least a feet from each other placed in rows and columns with writing boards in the ground. These students were taking tests to prepare them for standardized testing. I could see the role of

memorization and teacher's authority from the way students were placed and how they were getting prepared to reproduce the textbook material in their answers. Students' used two sources of knowledge and literacy at school: textbooks and teachers' authoritarian knowledge. The principal was hardly seen, one of the tenured and senior teacher was made in charge of the school when the principal was not in school.

There was no teachers' lounge so teachers usually sat in the principal's room to pass the day. I would often find teachers discussing their marriage affairs, families, showing each other the recent embroidery they had had on their clothes, would be knitting or embroidering themselves, or eating. One of the teachers whose sister recently passed away left behind a two year old daughter. This little toddler would come to school with her aunt everyday and be entertained and fed by the girls in the school. Teachers could have used this time for constructive learning opportunity, field visits, or something they are were not able to do during the academic year, however they chose to simply spend the few months passing time by warming seats and enjoying with their colleagues. It made me really have pity on the students on one hand, while on the other question the dedication of the teachers towards the education of the girls in the village. Were they only coming to get a pay check at the end of the month or were they truly committed to the growth and nurture of their students? Where was their loyalty and professional commitment to education? Could the girls look up to them as role models?

There were only seven teachers and six rooms for a total of 10 grades (Pre-Kindergarten - Grade 8). 120 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 3 were

considered one classroom, with one teacher. They were squished as they sat on the bare floor in the old room that once comprised the whole school building.

Men would gather usually after *Maghrib* (sunset prayers) in a circle called a *chopal* to discuss key issues concerning the village and making important decisions.

Women usually gathered around in the morning times at different places such as a tube well, at each other's house or on farmlands during a break. Whenever I would listen to the conversations and have a dialogue with them about educational facilities for girls and boys, I was always told that the school is not doing its job in providing quality education to its students.

Teachers work less and are on vacation more. They (teachers) say even if you don't come every day in the week, at least come on the days the district officers are there to inspect the school.

Our daughters do not get the attention they need from the teachers and principal. Even though the government has provided free books to the students, our daughters are never given free books. Most of the time girls do not get the stipend of Rs. 200 also.

Only listening to their perspective blinded my vision of the school, but it was important for me to create these moments of discussion and dialogue with the community to know how they felt about the school, its environment and sending their girls to schools.

Many girls' narratives and our discussion in the classroom related the following:

Two of our teachers, who are natives of the village, would send us to their (teacher) homes and ask us to wash their dishes, do their laundry, cook, or take care of their children....in return they would pass us with flying colors in the exams even if we have done badly...some of the girls told their parents about this, who informed the principal, and this issue was raised at the district level....several

officers from the district used to come during the past few months to talk to us and inquire about it.....the principal and teachers were in a clash and argument all the time...

This was the incident that the principal and District Education Officer were keeping a secret from me. Now it made sense why the community members were reacting in such a peculiar way in my discussions with them. There was no school for girls after eighth grade unless they wanted to travel a distance of 15 miles to another small town for school. Students felt comfortable in sharing their fears and apprehensions. In their writings and narratives (before the curriculum implementation), students shared the following:

Our school is disorganized, we miss at least one or two class periods every day, most of them are Mathematics, English, or Islamic Studies. This is because we have very few teachers and more students. Sometimes, we (grade 8) or grade 7 students go to other classrooms to teach.

Other students stated the following:

1. "Students should come happily to school, which is not the case. We do not have a good atmosphere to study in school."
2. "School should be a place where we can have some fun with our friends that we cannot at have home or anywhere else."
3. "Schools should be a place where students are attracted and motivated to come to school every day."
4. "Teachers should have a good and inviting attitude for teaching."
5. Teachers come and go from the city, only two are from the village, they do not have enough time or dedication to teach us more and give tutor us after school.

Students had greater expectations from their teachers, particularly regarding what and how they were taught. School was a relief and a safe haven for many students, whose fathers were abusive and strict at home. They expected their school to be a place where they could talk to their friends, play and enjoy their learning. However, from the above quotes, it seems that it is forbidden to think that learning can also be through playing. Thus students were very open with me in discussing aspects of schooling that they did not feel comfortable with and wanted to change.

A black and white script at the entrance to the door on the left was a recent inscription in all private and public schools in the state of Punjab. It reads

No punishment, only love. The Government of Punjab prohibits any bodily injury in all private and public schools. In case of any complaint or problem, contact the X District Education Office.

When asked regarding this from the girls in the school, they stated that teachers usually asked them to get tree twigs or branches from trees within school premises so that those who had not memorized their work could be beaten on the knuckles by them. *“Sometimes our whole class stands up on the benches if our teacher is angry with us for not memorizing.”* It was interesting that the principal knew about these “punishments”, approved them, and used them herself. *“This is how these girls will behave. In fact if they are persistently not memorizing, we bring the whole class outside and make them sit like chicken in the scorching heat, so they learn a lesson”*, stated the principal when I asked her about classroom punishments. This made me question school personnel’s and as educational leader’s attitude towards students. Was “bodily injury” the only way we might offend or punish a student in school. What about other norms present in a

classroom such as teacher's authority, her centrality in being the provider of all knowledge, teaching to the test, not providing a fair opportunity to all students to grow and prosper? What about segregating students based upon their performance, and re-enrolling girls only if they can perform well on the tests? These not only hinder a student's ability in a classroom but force her to follow whatever the teacher says because a teacher is always right and can never be challenged. What about providing students with empowerment, motivation, inspiration, and encouragement, building upon their lived and rich experiences, and transcending gender stereotypes about girls to teach them to respect themselves and stand up for their rights?

The school's end-of-grade results were announced during a special assembly in the morning. The principal made the initial statements while the teachers of each class announced the first three position holders (the first three students with the highest overall scores for the year), also mentioning who had passed and who was retained. The students who scored the highest in all grades came to the front of the assembly and shook hands with the principal who congratulated them. The principal then scolded the ones who were retained providing them another chance after the school re-opens in August for re-testing, if they passed the re-test they would be promoted to the next grade. I did not find this tradition of the school encouraging or motivating for the students. It was an honor for some students, while an insult for the rest causing low self-esteem and morale for girls who did not perform well. Students were being judged like a product in an assembly line according to their scores. Those who passed were successful, while those who failed were rejected and discarded. This approach lends itself towards the traditional approach to

education. I believe that students should be provided chances and flexibilities to excel with a varied approach to learning.

Girls' narratives clearly indicated that their home environment hindered their education and learning. They had to help their mothers' rear younger children or do all the housework once they came back from school. One of the fifth grade students told me:

I get up at 4:30 am in the morning, pray, make breakfast and prepare lunch for all the 10 members of our family, wash the dishes and clothes, and get ready for school at 7:15 am. I do this so my parents can send me to school. I always do these household chores so I can come to school. It is hard for me to focus on my studies when I have to take care of everything. I memorize my work in the night, otherwise my teachers punish me.

At least sixty percent of the girls stated that there was a lot of “شور و غل” (noise) at home, which was not conducive for their learning and studying. Most of them mentioned that they lock themselves in a smaller area or room to study and stay away from the daily routine of their houses.

Home and school environment make it difficult for girls to enjoy and value their education, thereby leading to a disinterest in their education and a possibility to drop out early from school.

Economic Needs

“We are tied by the hands of poverty, if we do not do farmland jobs how will we feed our children?” This is a reality, where there are major survival issues; women have to compromise their wishes and goals to support their families. Another woman told me

“... we do not have food when we go back home, if our daughters do not work with us, we will have nothing to feed our children and no roof to sleep under in the night.” Figure 10 below illustrates the hard work women do to survive.



Figure 10: Women and girls separating rice grains

Sixty five percent of Pakistani citizens live in rural areas and more than fifty percent lie below the poverty line. Women have to sacrifice for the sake of their own selves and their families well being. I remember those days during winter when there was no heater in our house and during summer when there was no electricity due to load shedding. I was ill for at least a week and grumbled all the time about not having such facilities available. After listening to the silenced voices of women, I could only barely understand how they

must feel without such facilities to the extent of having no shelter under themselves at night to sleep peacefully. They must be worried all the time, thinking about how they would fulfill their families needs and “raise our children perfectly as we thought before we got married.”

After listening to a seventy five year old women’s narrative, whom I recently found out has passed away, I looked around in her one room house. She did not have electricity, gas, or water supply. All her life she worked on farmlands and made beds and fans of date palm leaves. Figure 11 depicts her house during her last few months in this world.



Figure 11: Seventy five year old women participant in her one room house

On one of the top shelves there were necklaces hanging. I was intrigued and asked what it was, how she had made those, and why they were hanging so high near the ceiling. She was astonished at my questions and said this is for the whole year.

These are pieces of meat that I have sown in string to dry, so we can use them throughout the year. You know we cannot afford to have meat so if someone gives it or we sacrifice our own animal (Muslims who can afford, sacrifice an animal in memory of Prophet Ibrahim's sacrifice and test for his son, Ismael); we share the meat and so dry it.

Figure 12 below shows the pieces of dried meat in my participant's house.



Figure 12: Dried pieces meat hung on the ceiling

Those of us, who can afford the luxuries of life, never hesitate in wasting and throwing away food, if it is more than a few days old. Hunger and such issues of poverty make it even more difficult for parents to spend on their daughter's education.

While passing the parliament representative's house, I saw gas lines being dug. I asked around about it. It was no surprise when I was told "these gas lines are only for his house and a few influential people in the area. It will not come to any other house even if they lie in the vicinity." What has the government done to meet the basic necessities of their citizens? People still in this technologically oriented day and age do not have access to gas, electricity, and water? What will a few Rs. 1000 (\$11) per family/month programs initiated by President Zardari for the rural poor families do to help these families survive?

Forms of Literacy

Cultural and social context of literacy is embedded in the daily and "routine" practices of people in the village. Some of these practices are conscious, while most remain unconscious. It was my aim to learn more specifically about these unconscious literacy practices that reflect the culture in the village. I believe literacy to be an important aspect of learning both at home and in schools. In addition, it is through these literacy practices that we, educational leaders can understand students' cultural context, and try to bridge the many types of knowledge that our students are a part of with the creative forms of knowledge brought in by researchers; making learning and literacy endeavors meaningful to our students. Girls' narratives and stories shed light on many unconscious literacy practices that are at most times assumed and expected. In the next two sections, I explain the practices at home and school that influence girls' lives and become a social baggage that they adapt to.

School Literacy Practices

Gender biases and inequities were prevalent in my classroom observations, teacher's conversations with her students, and content of textbooks that were being reviewed in the classes. It seemed relevant to assume that much of the information available to the students was limited suiting the interest of bureaucracy, politicians, and feudal. Teachers' attitude towards students and their education was a clear indication of disinterest for learning at school. In addition, there were many values, morals, and ethics that students were learning from their teachers and principal that were questionable and raised concerns. Figure 13 illustrates the dimensions of school literacy that appeared in girls' narratives and writings.

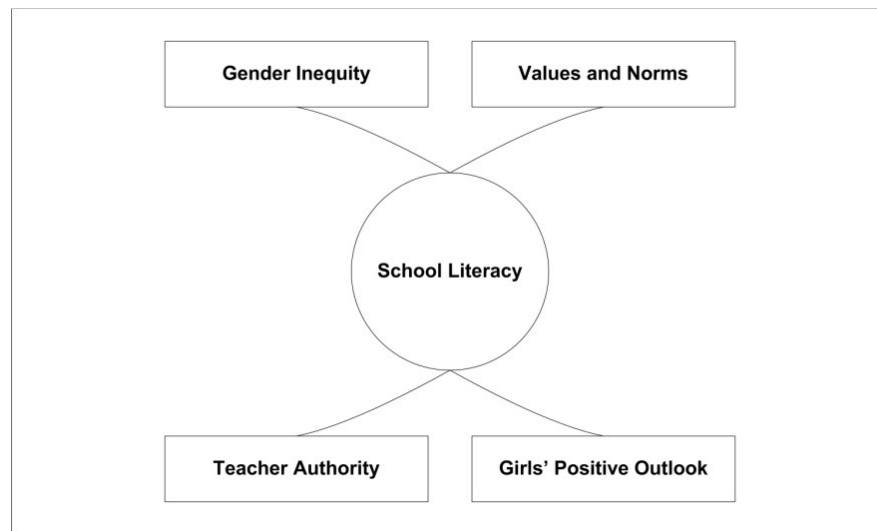


Figure 13: School literacy practices

Gender Inequities. I repeatedly observed teachers sometimes cursing and scolding children who attempted to question the inequities. For example, while reading a

poem in the eighth grade English textbook a student asked her teacher why the poem stated that only boys are naughty. “My younger sisters are very naughty too. They play with utensils, sometimes drench themselves in flour, or break things. Do you think girls can be naughty?” The teacher after a pause and with her eye brows raised stated:

How can you even think like that? Girls sometimes do mischievous things but you cannot say they are naughty. We have to be shy and submissive otherwise we will be like a boy which is not good. Next time do not ask such silly questions, I do not want you to think in this manner.

At another point a girl asked her teacher, “Why is it that my mother has to work on the farmlands and do housework while my father only does the former or in my uncle’s case sit at home?”

The teacher only stated “women have to do more things than men to prove themselves as good wives.” What was she implying to the student in this case that it’s a “norm” for women to be oppressed and worked to their fullest capacity to earn an equal status? Teachers, who have been trained in the same system of education, deal with their students in a similar way promoting the oppression of masses, while gaining power and control over their students. With this view of education in public schools, there is no doubt that parents do not find investing in their child’s education as significant for her/his growth as an individual.

Textbook content raised several concerns about gender inequity as well. A chapter titled “A day in the life of a student” in the English textbook was focused on a boy with two black and white pictures of a boy studying and another one with him washing his face. It had an explicit focus on Islamic values, where the boy went to the *masjid* for

prayers, read the Quran, and performed the necessary ablution for prayers. In addition, the chapter focused on the father helping the boy with his homework and the use of newspapers and magazines as extra material to study. This kind of portrayal of a “perfect” life of a student seemed very superficial and unrealistic. Firstly it ignored girls, teachers, and mothers. It laid a patriarchal version of a boy’s life with his father. Did he have a mother or any significance of a woman in his life? Surely, his father was not cooking food and rearing him at home. Why have the textbook boards focused on creating such a skewed vision of life in Pakistan for girls and boys? What can one expect girls to think and how will they react to such stories and poems? When girls do build up the courage to ask questions, they are scolded and are treated badly as if they have committed a sin. Even after so many efforts from United Nations and other western agencies to change the curriculum/textbooks, it is hard to imagine if anything can be done to provide girls with different resources to create a “better picture of life”. “How come we only read about men as doing heroic things, I know we are not worth anything like my father says.”

Girls were continuously asked to be submissive, told that they were insignificant partners with an explicit mention of domestic chores and their roles as mother/daughter/wife. Why were girls always being bombarded with the same kind of language and social practices that forced them to maintain a lower status? Why weren’t the teachers conscious about these explicit and implicit issues underlying the textbooks, their conversations and actions? When I mentioned this to the teachers, only one of them

said that these practices are “running through our blood”. Thus implying that there is no way we can think differently or help eradicate such “norms” in the village.

Home economics textbook that students look up to for something interesting to do than to memorize reinforced the values, norms, and culture of the village. One of the chapters clearly outlines a schedule of activities to be carried out during the day with time duration of each activity. Closely looking at the schedule reveals several activities that were gender biased such as making tea in the evening (spending 30 minutes on it), helping mother with household chores (spending 90 minutes on it), and eating dinner, clearing the dishes and washing them (30 minutes for it). What are the textbook boards trying to reiterate through these activities? Any “good girl” would like to follow such as schedule and be obedient. Why were the teachers using these and not questioning the information? Since boys are not required to take home economics, there is no question of including them in such kind of unnecessary schedules and content matter.

Values and Morals. Another form of school literacy practice that I observed and learned from girls’ narratives was house hold affairs/matters, values, and morals that students were learning from their teachers. Girls were aware of what was happening in each of their teacher’s lives.

You know Ms. X’s sister passed away due to an electric current in her water bucket. Her husband remarried only two months later and has said that he will not take care of his two year old daughter that she left behind. Ms. X has taken her responsibility. She was saying that men are free, they can do as they like, and we have to take care of their mess and troubles.

Ms. Y does not get along with her husband but she still has to everything that her husband likes in order to remain married, you know that divorce or separation is not considered good in our society.

These conversations of a woman's role came up again and again in some form or another. Even though I was glad that students mentioned these in their narratives and gave me a chance to discuss these in the classroom, yet I felt frustrated that no one thought to change this kind of thinking, asking women to given in to every situation no matter how much pressure, abuse, or torture she was going through. Thus, it seemed that any kind of effort, judgment, and attempt for reform was left to the girls; they may or may reiterate the same culture. In most cases, the same cultural and social practices were being reinforced in girls' lives.

One of the book chapters titled "Etiquette" in the English textbook was exceptionally interesting to me, particularly in terms of the values and ethics that students were being taught. The following two sentences were particularly of interest: "Etiquette of eating or table manners are very important." "Sit well poised (in a good way) on the table." There is no concept of a table in the village. A *charpai* (rope bed) serves the purpose for sitting, sleeping, doing homework, and eating. Mother brings the food to the *charpai* and everyone eats together. In most cases where a woman and her children are working in the fields, they eat together during a small break. Thus, it seemed irrelevant to mention such "etiquettes" that rural students cannot relate to.

Teachers' authority. "Respect teachers because we are taught to do that." No matter a teacher says or does, students were expected to respect her and listen to her. In addition, there was clear expectation that nobody could challenge teacher's knowledge or

raise questions that do not directly deal with the subject being taught. Students would stand up in respect every time a teacher entered the classroom and greet her. This was a clear indication of a teacher's authority, power, and control in the classroom. "We can never say that we have not understood the concept especially in Math. We would be punished or cursed if we dare to do so." What did this mean for students? They could not be taught using a different pedagogical process if one was not working. How would teachers know whether their teaching style was helping students and creating more *nikami* (academically poor) students who can be part of the attendance list for the purposes of literacy statistics and enrollment, yet could be easily kicked out of school due to their low performance. How can students be expected to go home and ask their illiterate parents and siblings to help them understand concepts in their textbooks? The most girls could do was memorize the method and answers and reproduce them without thinking in the examination. If they were lucky, they would get good grades and teachers would pride their instruction and pedagogical process.

Teachers enforce a strict schedule that we have to follow, class period one after another, test time, exam time. Teachers say it helps us value time so we can have good behavior and character. At home, everything is flexible and we can do things as we want and like.

Forcing students to follow a rigorous schedule and timings caters to the needs of the military and patriarchal structure.

Girls Positive Outlook. Girls shared that they would do their best to help everyone around them with their knowledge. One of the seventh grade student commented

In school we learn things that we can use practically in our lives such as time management skills, organizational skills, “حساب کتاب” mathematical skills, and Islamic teachings that help us become successful in this life and the hereafter.

Girls had a positive attitude towards their learning at school and found it useful for their practical lives at home and in the community.

Home and Family Literacy

Rummel and Quintero (1997) in their study of beliefs and practices of effective literacy teachers found that family history and literacy are an interwoven fabric of social and cultural practices. Girls’ and women’s narratives related many literacy practices that if built upon by educational leaders can strengthen, support, recognize, and nurture students’ learning. Many family literacy practices were different than those practiced in schools, although both were layered with cultural and social norms and assumptions. Figure 14 illustrates the dimensions of home and family literacy that were common in all girls’ narratives and writings.

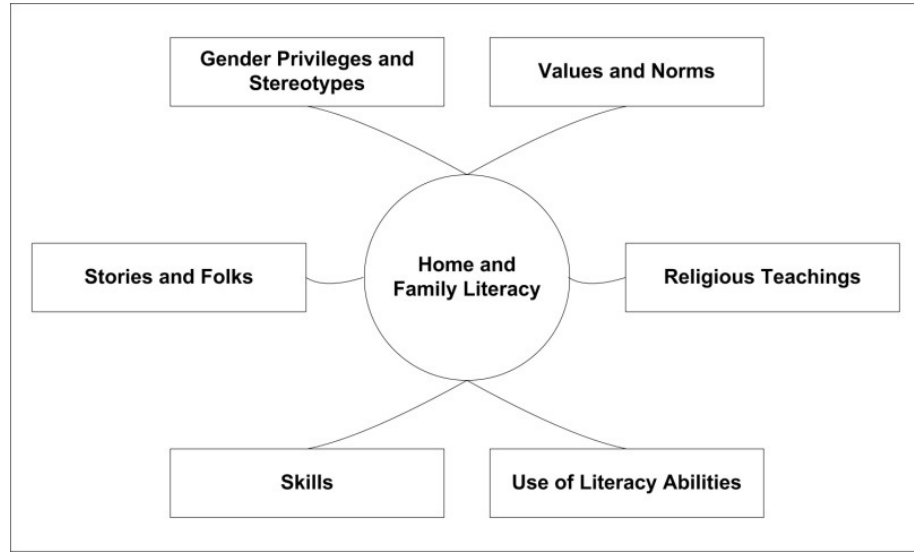


Figure 14: Home and family literacy

Stories and Folks. Many girls shared the importance and significance of stories told by their grandparents. These stories have been part of a legacy where parents and grandparents have passed them on through generations. Some of these stories and folks are religious, while others are cultural. Girls told me that “رات کو سونے سے پہلے میری دادی مجھے“

”بہت کہانیاں سناتی ہیں“ (my grandmother tells me many stories before I go to sleep in the night). In addition, many relate to the time of the British Empire in India and thus talk about issues of kings, queens, princes, princesses, and the poor. I remember that when we visited our grandparents, my grandmother in particular always told us stories about the power and control of kings and the oppression of people under him. There always used to be a “hero” and a moral of the story that was told. I never recall the story of any heroin

that could have made a difference in our attitudes and lives. Sometimes, grandparents shared stories of migrating to Pakistan from India. One of the girls narrated:

I do not have my grandmother but my grandfather tells me stories before I sleep or sometimes in the afternoon when he is missing his youth days. The one that I remember is about the time of Indian and Pakistani partition. There was so much bloodshed, my grandfather told me that everyone who wanted to migrate to Pakistan was worried about their lives. Trains that left India were always full but when they reached Pakistan, almost everyone was dead with a lot of blood flowing in the bogies. The only people that were sometimes spared were women. So my grandfather dressed up as a woman, I mean he wore a burqa (Muslim head to toe covering) that also covered his entire face so nobody could tell that he was a man and not a woman . . . giggles . . . He said at least for once being a woman was helpful but it was a strange feeling for him throughout his journey, pretending to be someone he is not.

This sixth grade perhaps did not realize the hidden meaning behind this story. It is easy to use and then discard a woman. She does not have any feelings. When women can be used and abused, a man feels very powerful and controlling, and eventually happy since no one can challenge him. What was he trying to convey to his granddaughter? That women are not worth anything? Such thinking is so common in the village that such practices feel necessary for girls and women to survive.

Values and morals. Girls shared that their parents emphasizing the importance of social and cultural norms that exist in the village such as how to live like a good girl (listening to elders), getting married soon after puberty, reproducing the first year of marriage (I was told, it is sin to do birth control), working on farmlands to support the family and helping husband. Two women stated the following: “I always tell my daughter to remain quite; it’s not good to talk a lot especially when she gets married.”

The only way girls can survive and gain some respect is to listen to their husbands and do what he says. We just give our daughters away and pray that they remain happy. As a girl's mother I do not have much say in anything.

These home literacy practices are very pertinent to societal conditions that exist in rural areas and have been explained earlier in this chapter.

Islamic teachings. Parents, grandparents, and elder siblings continuously told girls to recitation Quran, in most cases without understanding it. Girls stated that their parents either sent them to the *masjid* (mosque), or had an *Aalima* (Female Muslim scholar) come in to teach them Quran and fundamentals of Islam. Some stated that their grandparents teach them to read the Quran. Establishing five daily prayers was emphasized by everyone at home. In fact many girls mentioned that their parents did not perform their prayers regularly and wished they would establish prayer as well. A few of the common Islamic teachings that came across in all the narratives included:

- a. “بڑوں کی عزت و احترام” Respect of elders
- b. Do good to others and they will do good to you
- c. Lies lead to hell
- d. Truth leads to heaven

Family and gender stereotyping. Majority of the households in Pakistan have an extended family system with grandparents living with their married sons. The children especially girls since they remain in the house at most times learn and adhere to the patriarchal structure and the gender power relations in the house. They were well aware of the gender inequities and openly shared them with me. “It’s really unfair why we are

not given as much freedom as boys.” Another girls stated, “We cannot go out of our houses except to the school, boys never stay in the house, they play with their friends or just do whatever...” The above stated comments also relate to the seclusion and isolation of girls at home. In addition, it testifies that women are not part of decision making or involved in the activities of the community. They also related that their grandfather, father and brothers do not have to do any housework or take care of the cattle in the house. Women have to take care of everything such as cooking, cleaning, and milking and feeding cows, in addition to working in the farmlands. Girls also related the attitude between their mother and father. It was very easy for them to narrate that their father was the head of the household, was in charge of everything, was the bread earner, and the person in the house who had control and power. Nobody could do anything before asking him. In addition, they were quick to tell me that their mothers were sometimes beaten for nothing. “My father comes home angry and takes his anger out on our mom or sometimes on us by beating, slapping, or kicking the food we make.” Living in such an environment, girls particularly perform, accept, and assume such gender roles in the society.

Looking at the gender privileges in the house, girls felt a lot of love and care for their mother. At several occasions girls stated:

My mother’s prayers have helped them reach this stage of their lives.

ماں کی دعا جنت کی ہوا (my mother’s prayers are like heaven’s wind, if you earn your mother’s prayers, you will go to heaven)

those who have parents, their house is well lit (blessed); those who do not have parents, their house is a graveyard.

Some other girls stated: “those who

appreciate their parents, she/he has earned paradise in the world.” A few girls quoted Prophet Muhammad’s sayings “a person who looks at her/his parents with love, Allah (God) grants them the reward of doing a pilgrimage”

Learning and imparting skills. Learning such skills that prepare a girl for her marriage is more important and considered to have preference over girls attending school. Since people believe that a girl’s final destination is her husband’s home, why not invest in things that would help her live her life better and she is able to serve her husband and his family. They do not realize that a girl’s future house, children, and living environment can be enriched with the knowledge and education she will bring with her upon her marriage. “If there is anyone we can send our girls to for sewing, embroidery, and learning Quran, we send them there.”

I have three daughters, two got married when they turned 13 years and the third one goes to 4th grade. I make sure they know how to recite the Quran and learn how to cook, sew, and embroidery so she does not have to depend on anyone for such household chores.

Many girls stated that they helped their younger siblings in their homework or teach them the basic skills as they will not be able to attend school. In addition, many

enthusiastically told me that they teach their grandparents about things that they did not know of such latest inventions, computers, use of mathematics to name a few.

Use of literacy abilities. Girls shared that they were asked to read letters, newspapers, stories, utility bills, and other forms of written text to family members such as mother, siblings not attending schools, and grandparents. They also helped their fathers and male members of the family in calculating income, produce on farms, and reading important documents related to farming.

Since I go to school, I was asked to write the weight of cotton that we were selling to the feudal. I immediately caught their fraud. They were weighing more but telling me a lesser quantity. I was able to detect 300 pounds of fraud they were doing with my father only because I was literate.

Another girl commented, “I often read newspaper and stories to my mother and grandparents. My father also asks me to read important farm documents and other letter.” There was a clear indication that these efforts to use literary skills at home and farmlands were selfless and never forced. Girls felt that they had to give back the knowledge to the village in some form and these were the forms they were using for it. It was fascinating, interesting, and eye opening. If teachers and principal had focused on these kinds of efforts, many children and adults in the village would have been literate due to the efforts of these young girls.

Role of Educational Leaders

I return to my research question of how educational leaders can address the issues of low literacy and enrollment in rural areas through the understanding of social and

cultural norms and forms of literacy. First, I illustrate in Figure 15, the dimensions and factors that impact literacy as they appeared in the data described above.

It is important for educational leaders to thoroughly understand the dimensions, particularly the social and cultural norms because they are in most cases reiterated at home and in school as forms of literacy. The power of influence that lies in the social norms is much greater than that of economic needs and necessities. Even if some kind of financial support is provided to address issues of poverty, survival, and shelter; norms and traditions would still take preference over a girl's equal access to education. Thus, a girl may not attend school or be provided some form of education if the cultural context or patriarchy dominates in the village.

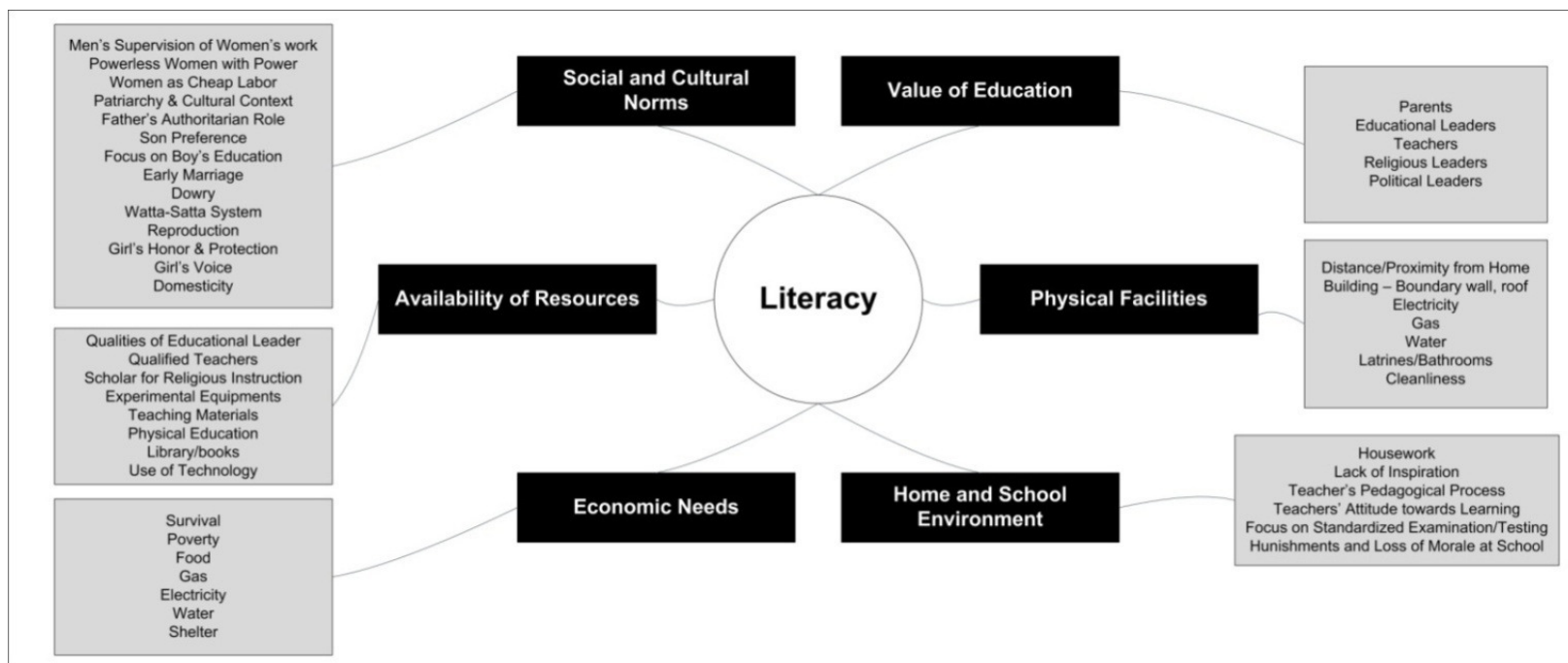


Figure 15: Dimensions and factors of literacy

Social norms and culture in the village need to be understood by educational leaders before any literacy effort may be fruitful. It was my persistence in addressing cultural issues, its comparison with Islamic rights for women, continuous dialogue and discussion, that led to some kind of acceptance and change in the way things were done in the village. If educational leaders are prepared and trained to meet such challenges and are dedicated enough to move beyond their assigned duties is when social reform and change would begin to occur.

In addition, educational leaders alone cannot change the culture in the village, it is a continuous effort that cannot be handled individually but collectively with the community to find acceptance of girls' equal access to education. Working collaboratively with parents, school personnel, and leaders would support the process of change and social action. There is no doubt that when girls are provided the means to attend school or some form of learning, they will use such an opportunity to enhance their own learning and application, as well as those of their siblings and family.

Creating a learning environment in school that inspires students to come to school every day and a purpose to live is vital for educational leaders to consider for increasing literacy and enrollment in rural areas. Training teachers to become role models instead of possessing an attitude of disinterest and considering their profession as a money making job would be necessary for educational leaders to address.

Thus, in order for any change to occur, even at a smaller level, it is important for educators to understand the importance of education and kinds of knowledge and literacy that girls learn. In addition, awareness of the cultural context and role of patriarchy that

force girls to work on farmlands and maintain a lower status is vital to be cultivated among teachers and girls simultaneously so that they can understand their rights and create some sort of balance in their lives.

Implementation and Impact of Critical Literacy Curriculum

In order to understand the impact of the critical literacy curriculum, I focus on the word "critical" to analyze the interviews, discussions, students' writings, and artifacts collected during and after the implementation of the curriculum. As mentioned earlier, critical, for the purposes of my analysis, implies creating consciousness among girls about their role, status, and issues in the society, while allowing them freedom to question, dialogue, discuss, and critically think about how, and what they are taught in schools and at home. Through my study and using the two pedagogies: Freirean and feminist, I wanted to create a learning environment where students through their speech, writing, and creativity were able to express themselves in a way that allows them to consciously relate to issues and question social conditions in their homes, school, farmlands, and more broadly in the society. What was my most important goal? Was it only to help students critically "read" what they were learning in school and outside? Did their learning relate to their lived experiences and their prior knowledge? My aim was to do more than what the research required me to do. I wanted girls to feel the joy for learning, be able to relate to their experiences, and question the inequities around them.

In my discussion and girls' narratives, I encountered many instances where girls mentioned that they were never asked to draw, do some kind of activity besides sitting on the benches cramped up with at least five or six of them together. While asking them

more questions about it, I learned that most of the girls use their time at home, while some being forced by their parents to sometimes draw, sew, and embroidery their clothes. In my attempt to make learning interesting for students, I used art and other forms and resources of creative work besides the content in the textbooks. I wanted the teachers to use the approach in their classes allowing the students to work cooperatively in groups, having them share their lived experiences, and learn from each other. I felt that students' thinking and creativity were subdued and suppressed especially in terms of art work and recognition of the multiple and diverse perspectives that were represented in the class.

Implementation of Curriculum

During my pilot study, I had realized that most girls from grades one through five would not be in attendance during the harvesting season, this time it was cotton. Thus my focus was on grades 6-8 and upon my arrival at the school, I was asked to take care of middle school. The curriculum (textbooks) had been finished (textbook questions and answers had been memorized in preparation for the annual standardized exam to be held in February). I was not sure how important these standardized exams were because during my last visit, I had seen and heard students' disinterest in the government's system of education. Teachers in several districts in Punjab province had boycotted conducting exams because of the government's failure to comply on its promise of increasing teachers' salaries. Thus, all students in grades five and eight had been given passing marks. The retained students were content with this decision; however, the outperforming students were not satisfied with only receiving passing marks.

Girls were enjoying their free play time in school as I entered the school premises. The teachers were happy to handover their classes to me so they could enjoy their time with each other and continue their gossips, and discussion about their family matters. I was asked to review difficult concepts with the students, making sure that students were able to answer all the questions and follow the “correct” methodologies to arrive at the answers (in case of Mathematics). I introduced myself to the students, had each one of them tell me their names and tried to remember them. In three days I was able to learn the names of at least 70 girls inside my classroom. A few of the girls commented on how quickly I had grasped their names and that made them really happy. A few of them told me, “you show how much you care about us”, I asked how do you know that, and they replied “you have learned our names so quickly, our teachers took at least a few months to do that”. Asking girls’ opinions about what to review, all of them indicated their weakness in Mathematics, English, and Islamic Studies. In particular, the geometry portion of the Mathematics book was pointed out by girls. Pakistan’s curriculum follows an integrated approach to mathematics where all concepts including geometry, algebra, and arithmetic are taught simultaneously and not separated as in United States. Thus we agreed to start the area of a circle and I would start reviewing the concept, when I received their consent and assent forms. Everyone was eager to learn and so brought in their forms the very next day.

Mathematics. I reviewed the textbook at home to become familiar with the terminologies (medium of instruction was Urdu vs. my education in English) and the “method” to derive the formula of πr^2 using a rectangle’s formula for area ($l \times b$). I

asked students to share the concept with me. Most of the students had memorized the formula and were good at pouring it out on me; however they seemed to show not much understanding of it when I asked to share how the formula was actually derived.

I had made a big green circle and smaller colored paper circles. Demonstrating the so called method in the textbook, I cut the circle into sixteen little triangles. I stuck the pieces of the circle together on the blackboard, with half of them pointing upwards and the other half downwards, to make a rectangle. I explained how the breadth of the rectangle was the radius of the circle and its length was half of the circle's circumference. If we multiplied these to calculate the area of the rectangle we would obtain the area of the circle. Thus, through the model, I explained the concept of calculating a circle's area. I had cut out smaller circles. Girls were divided into small groups of their choice and handed them a circle. I asked them to cut it into as many pieces as the group decided. I also gave them a piece of paper with a problem to solve. I believe this experience was particularly different for them in case of Mathematics.

We are required to listen to our teacher lecture from the textbook, then she solves the question on the blackboard just like it is done in the book and we copy it in our notebooks. Later, while our teacher sits comfortably in her chair in the front of the classroom, we solve questions, as many as we can, provided in the exercise following the same method as our teacher, commented a seventh grade student when I inquired about how they are taught.

Practicing shared leadership and responsibility, each member of the group was assigned a duty, as well as, the task to solve it individually first and then revert to the group for discussion and collaboration. Girls worked cooperatively in their groups, as I walked around helping them. Figure 16 depicts a group sticking ten pieces of circle together to

form a rectangle. Figure 17 shows a group that had cut the circle into 16 pieces. Figure 18 illustrates how girls ensure that the pasted pieces of circle make a rectangle.



Figure 16: Sticking ten pieces of circle together to form a rectangle



Figure 17: Sticking 16 pieces of circle together to form a rectangle



Figure 18: Girls ensure that the pieces form a rectangle

Each group was asked to come to the board and explain how they arrived at the answer, also explaining the formula they used and if they thought there was another way to solve the problem. Those groups who had trouble with the concept were helped by other groups and me. I remember the teachers who were observing my instructional process commenting: “This group thing seems so chaotic; do you even think they can learn like this in so much commotion?” commented an eighth grade teacher. I held my comments till they realized themselves or were prompted by students about the learning occurring in the class. Three days into the curriculum implementation when the classroom teacher and vice principal of the school walked inside the class, three seventh students suddenly stood up and expressed their views:

“Teacher see even the most *nikami* (academically worst) students in our class are working too. You said that we should not waste our time on explaining anything to them but Ms. Amna considers them just like us (academically good) and makes us all work together and help one another. She does not move on till each one of us has understood.”

This comment was so sudden and direct, the teacher felt threatened on the one hand and ridiculed on the other to have been challenged by a student like this in front of the whole class, including me and some other teachers. This was a moment of consciousness and awareness within the students about the pedagogy/process. They were clearly able to see how students are not treated equally and are discriminated based on their performance. Later students explained that some of the girls who were labeled “*nikami*” were firstly named so because they wanted to play, distract teachers, and do other things than learn, and secondly because some of their elder sisters who had been in the school earlier were “good and serious” students. It was interesting to see how girls were able to make connections work vs. play and the way teachers’ attitudes were being reflected in their pedagogy.

One the teachers seemed upset about the instructional style and process. She told the students:

If we teach you like this, it will take the whole day to only do one lesson. Where will you get the time to do all your questions and memorize? When will I listen to you?

Many students responded to her questions: “ We did as much as we do with you in approximately the same time.” Another student commented:

I am confident that I will remember the method and formula more this time and do not feel the need to memorize. If I practice at home also, I will be able to solve problems in the exam as well.

Some of the eight grade students stated: “We waste more time and miss our class periods. In this way we can use our time in a better way.” Students had a clear realization and assessment of the pedagogical process. I did not have to explain the impact of my pedagogy to the teachers; the students were the users, speakers, and evaluators.

Discussion and Dialogue. More than 85 percent of the students’ parents worked on farmlands and the girls worked on the weekends and evenings of summer after school. Using the two pedagogies and their emphasis on building upon students’ lived experiences and perspective, I provided girls an opportunity to share with the class about the land their parents or they worked on, how big the land was? If yes, how did they know? If no, then why not? Did we need to know how big the land was? Why do you think so? The different kinds of crops they grew, how much of each crop, if they remember, is produced at the time of harvesting, and where do they get water for their crops. These questions encouraged their curiosity and made them think critically for a moment about these questions and their relation to the concept of geometry that we were reviewing. Of course there were no rights or wrong answers. Many students wanted to participate and talk. Since everyone had a different story to tell, students learned from each others’ stories and were able to relate to their culture and experiences. In addition, I

connected to the students more at an individual level where I could recognize their feelings and hard work. We also discussed the importance of understanding measurement of the piece of land itself. A few seventh grade girls commented: “It would be easier for us to see how many seeds we need, how much water would be needed.” Students were soon able to connect this discussion with the concepts of production and cost effectiveness. I linked this to the ecological and holistic characteristics of the feminist classroom environment that Shrewsbury (1987) talked about by explaining the wastage of seeds and water in case we did not know how much land there was and how much of raw material was needed.

Gender Segregation/Isolation. The most significant point that appeared in almost all discussions were how gender segregated the work was. Girls and their mothers were responsible for harvesting, taking the weeds out, and getting the land ready for ploughing. Men were in charge of supervising women’s work, ploughing and watering the fields, and planting the seeds. From a feminist perspective, this was another teachable moment, where I critically inquired about who made such distinctions in work, why were these made, who benefitted from it, and who was exploited. In addition, we talked about the role of feudalism and how it breeds gender inequities and discrimination against women. Girls stated: “At least we should be aware of what these waderas do with us. But there is no one to challenge them or even say anything to them about our rights.”

Many girls also shared that land/property is often not measured properly and when the time comes for the distribution of wealth, particularly when men inherit from their fathers, there is much debate, fighting, arguments, and at some points people are

also killed to get more share in the property. In addition, many students said the following:

when it's time for distribution of wealth, our mothers are always asked to give up their share because essentially we are not worth keeping it, its' not our right to inherit, that is what we are told.

Customs are deeply embedded from colonialism and other religions that its' difficult for people to even think that the opposite exists in Islam, where women can inherit property both from her family and her husband. This gave me an opportunity to share Islamic law regarding women's inheritance and we were able to discuss, dialogue, and reflect upon such practices, their authenticity, why such practices exist, who benefits from them.

Recently, my mother-in-law's father was distributing his wealth according to his will. She has seven sisters and only one brother. All the sisters were told that they would not inherit and their shares will be given to the brother. Very convenient, I thought for the brother to do so, inherit all the property and deny his sisters of their shares. Even though they live a town, an hour away from the village, yet such cultural practices are very common. Realizing that women were denied their right, there was not much the sisters could do; no law or policy could force the brother to provide them their shares. Women are usually divorced, boycotted in the case of my mother-in-law if they demand their share in the property.

At the heart of feminist pedagogy is the inclusion of gender, in addition to creating awareness and social change. There are no libraries in public schools and often I was told that:

We never read stories or books. Our teachers think it's a waste of time. There are a few books that are locked up in the principal's office. When our syllabus (textbooks) is finished, we might be able to take a book out and read it.

It was important to listen to and include stories, folks, and other reading material that build upon students' cultural context, in addition to providing them the ability to inquire, think critically, and critique their way of life. We shared many stories together, not only about those relating to farmlands and village life, my privileged life, but also about girls' struggles to attend school, and lives of Muslim women to name a few. One such story that was shared implicitly focused on gender equity and opposed the norms where, intelligence and reasoning are not associated with females:

A farmer and his wife lived in a village called Tamba. They owned a small piece of land where they sowed, cultivated, and harvested wheat and cotton every year. They had just harvested wheat and were ready to sell it. The farmer had stocked some wheat for the whole year for himself and his wife. Every day he went to the market but was not able to sell his wheat at a good price and was told that the quality was not good enough. One day his wife kneaded wheat flour to make bread. Like always a crow pecked on it and took some part away. That day she left her housework and wondered why the crow was doing this. A few days later when the farmer and his wife were ready to plough the land, she told him to plough it well. He did not understand what she meant by this. After he was done, she came outside with a clay pot and threw it on the land. The pot broke into pieces. She told the farmer that he had not done a good job in ploughing the field. The next day the farmer worked hard and at the end of the day his wife came and repeated her actions. This time the clay pot broke into three pieces. She again told the

farmer that he needs to work on the land more. On the third day, when she threw the clay pot on the ground, it did not break. The farmer was surprised. Now his wife was happy and told him to sow the seeds. Next year when they harvested the wheat, it turned out to be of good quality and was sold at a higher price. This time when the crow pecked at the kneaded flour, its beak got stuck together. The farmer and his wife were happy and made a special eating place for crows in their backyard.

We shared many aspects of the story after it was narrated such as what did you learn? What was the farmer's wife trying to explain through her actions? What can you conclude about her thinking and how she helped her husband? Why is ploughing the field important? What are some of the land related problems that you know of, which when resolved will help the production of crops in your land?

Project Work. For the following few days, I had devised small assignments and projects for them that related to geometry and the concepts they wanted me to review such as surface area and volume, to name a few. I brought in a box of scissors and colored paper and asked them to pick one of each and cut a piece out from the paper they have. The length and shape of the piece did not matter. The idea behind being that there are big and small things everywhere with different shapes and sizes such as the land that they worked on. We should be grateful for what we have and appreciate everyone for who they are. Each piece is unique and creative and should be valued. Therefore a broader context of social issues was discussed with the girls so that they treat each other equally, kindly, and be tolerant of one another.

To build upon their cultural knowledge and to relate to their reality, girls were asked to measure the length of the piece with their hands and see what proportion of their hand accounts for the length. This of course can be done for any shape. At home and work, people measure with the help of their hands or feet. Cloth is usually measured by the arm or hand and an estimate is calculated. Many students indicated that this is what their parents do at home and work and have taught them to do so as well, thereby acknowledging home literacy practices as well.

To make the content meaningful to the students and to realize the need to critically think and apply concepts in their daily lives, girls were given a project which they worked on for two weeks as concepts of geometry were reviewed. Students were divided into groups as and how they liked. I wanted students to have freedom and choice inside the class as it would uplift their morale and provide them empowerment; they rather than the teacher can make decisions about their learning. There was vacant area at the backside of the school which the students used for the project. This area was divided it into equal parts so that each group had a chance to work collaboratively to achieve the objectives of the project. They ploughed the land, planted seeds, and gave water. They noted the measurements of their land, area, perimeter, the volume of water needed, and the number of seeds for plantation. Girls who had never been allowed to help in ploughing were given an opportunity to do so. It is considered that only men have the physical ability to use the equipment and do it. This project was meant to promote equity with a realization that girls and women can be “trusted” to do “men’s” job on farmlands. This gave us a chance to discuss some of the rights of women in Islam such as equal pay

for equal work, ownership of property, business, and inheritance and compare it to the prevalent culture of the village.

Science. In case of Science, I continued the same project as for Mathematics. The planting of beans and other small crops raised discussions about germination, pollination, reproduction, and photosynthesis. “The fact that we are able to practically do something in the school and perform experiments makes school and learning enjoyable”, commented a sixth grade student.

Students were practically explained about the science concepts in the textbook. I brought some books, magazines and other hands on structures of the internal structure of plants so that students could visually understand and relate to the topic. Explanation of reproduction, comparing and contrasting it with human beings, led to a discussion on health issues, girls’ puberty, and social norms about early marriages, dowry, and producing children. A few students commented: “Our teachers say that it is taboo to talk about these personal aspects in school. Our parents are responsible for telling us about everything.” “Why do we have to reproduce, why didn’t Allah give men this characteristic? I guess men would not have had the patience to bear the pain.”

It is usually our mothers who tell us about these things, once we are nearing it. I had my periods and thought I had cancer. I did not know what to do. I wish my mother had prepared me for it.

There are so many things that we do and practice, us girls do not like to burden our parents with dowry, our marriage and everything . . . what does Islam say about dowry?

We had a great discussion; there were many aspects, particularly regarding health that girls shared openly in the classroom. Even though there is a small section relating to the human body and health issues, yet students were never involved in discussion about things that affected their lives and to help them overcome their own challenges. Adapting feminist pedagogy, I felt the need to provide girls a space to comfortably discuss such topics that were of concern to them. It was difficult to initiate the discussion, but I realized that if I do not take up this difficult challenge to change how students feel about their learning, I would never be able to do it later. After all, feminist action research requires one to create such moments where the researcher (myself) can take “action” and do something beyond collecting data. This concept of creating a space for reform, change, and action facilitated my relationship and involvement in my participants’ lives.

In Social Studies, students related the concept of land, soil, and crops through this project. They were able to understand what sort of land and soil is needed for plantation, and which seeds can be planted during that particular season. Furthermore, students explained the kinds of crops they grew and when different crops were sown and harvested. Sowing and harvesting crops is time dependent and farmers should be well aware of them. Girls of course knew verbatim which crops belong to a particular season but had never understood why there were seasons for different crops until we discussed it. Through the different projects, students were able to critically question their own assumptions and social practices, explore for themselves, and also acquired problem solving skills.

English. Students expressed the need to practice reading and understanding words and phrases. Most of the girls mentioned: “Our teacher teaches us English in Urdu, we feel that we cannot converse and understand English like girls in the city do. Please can you help us?” This was very interesting; teacher was teaching them English, a second language since all other subject areas were in Urdu. I gave all 70 students a chance to read at least three times. We discussed the stories and poems. Girls were divided into groups and we played a game. Each member in the group was given a chance to answer the question. I would ask them to read, explain the literal and contextual meaning of the word or phrases and use them in their own sentence. I had taken chocolates and candies with me. Each student was given one on attempting to answer the question. Girls became very confident and often spoke to me in English and asked me words and their meanings.

The gender biases and discrimination in the English textbook as mentioned earlier in this chapter, once again helped me create a space for critical thinking, discussion, create awareness. We were able to link our discussion to Islamic Studies and Prophet Muhammad’s life examples. We talked about how Prophet Muhammad knew and did all those chores that are today labeled and stereotyped as woman’s work. This provided an easy transition to Islamic Studies that I explain in the next section.

Islamic Studies. I asked students if they could name role models to me. As I had expected, most students related different men as their role models. I inquired about any women they knew whom they could call their role models. It was sad to hear that only a handful of women’s names came up whom the girls had heard about but did not necessarily read, study, or listen about in depth like the male role models. In addition,

many commented and talked about Prophet Muhammad and his character. Students shared:

Prophet Muhammad used to do all the household chores himself even though he was an orphan. He used to milk goats, cook, sew and mend his own clothes, wash and clean, cut his hair, gather wood for burning, and محنت مزدوری (labor) in his house.

Thus this led to our discussion about Prophet Muhammad and his examples of respecting and appreciating the differences among people. Our discussion centered on the kinds of jobs that were done by the Prophet which made the girls critically think and question the jobs done by their parents. Some seventh grade students commented: “My father never does any work at home. My sisters and I are always there to provide him with everything he needs in the house.” Others stated: “My father helps with cleaning the house and cooking with my mother after coming back from the fields.” A student intrigued by our discussion stated: “I don’t know why we have categorized jobs, my mother works in the farmland just like my dad and my father helps my mom with the house work when they return.” This discussion gave us the opportunity to discuss other women’s rights in Islam and compare and contrast the cultural practices such as watta satta system, honor killings, misinterpretations of veiling, and some of the Pakistani laws and ordinances pertinent to women.

Their assignment was to get together in groups, pick a woman role model (religious, political, or someone in their house), research about her in different books, magazine, and newspapers that I had provided them, and write her characteristics

including why they liked her. I gave them colored chart papers and markers. Each group wrote about their woman role models on the chart paper in the class and was asked to come to the front of the class and share their viewpoints and role model with the whole class. Each student in the group was given the responsibility to talk about one or more characteristics about the role model. Figure 19 and 20 illustrate how girls worked cooperatively in groups and consulted books to research on their role models.



Figure 19: Consulting books to write about role models



Figure 20: Girls writing about their role models in groups

Interesting to note in Figure 20 above is that girls did not have enough space to sit together so they either stood or sat on the floor to share their ideas. A few of the women that girls wrote and critically thought about are as follows:

1. Safia (Prophet Muhammad's aunt)
 - a. Women's knowledge and wisdom
 - i. She was Prophet Muhammad's aunt and the second female to accept Islam and died at the age of 73.
 - ii. She was known for her knowledge and wisdom throughout Arabia
 - iii. She was also famous for her عظمت کردار اور بڑے مرتبے والی (skills), عفت (high character), and تقویٰ (consciousness). She was very

knowledgeable about everything. She participated in all the battles and threw spears at those who attacked Prophet Muhammad. She morally and physically supported all Muslims. She was the only person who saved Prophet Muhammad during Battle of Uhud when the enemies came from behind the mountain to kill him. We like her because of her bravery, her risky and daring attitude, and her knowledge. If all women are like her who have knowledge and are brave to face the challenges that lie ahead and stand equally beside men, women can gain some respect in society and men will acknowledge her efforts.

b. Steadfastness and bravery

- a. She was afflicted with a lot of pain both physical and mental because she accepted Islam but she stood steadfast and strong.
- b. Her brother was killed during a battle in which she also participated and when she requested to see her brother's body. She was told that the enemies opened him up to remove his heart and liver so you will not be able to bear looking at him. She did see him, was very tolerant and only said "all things return to Allah."

2. Khadija (Prophet Muhammad's wife)

a. Wealth and humility

- i. She belonged to the Quraish tribe and to the richest family in Makkah, Saudi Arabia.
- ii. She owned and operated her own trade business in many cities across Arabia, which was known to be the biggest and most famous business.
- iii. She was a widow before she married Prophet Muhammad at the age of 40 (Prophet Muhammad was 25 years old).
- iv. She was known to be very honest, humble, and trustworthy
- v. She spent most of her money to the poor and needy.

1. We think she was humble because of her kind nature.

Prophet Muhammad was her employee and used to take her trade to other cities. She married him, even though he was her worker, poor, orphan, and illiterate. Being so rich she could have married someone else, but due to her humble character, she chose Prophet Muhammad.

b. Bravery

- i. She was the first person, including both men and women, to accept Islam and comfort Prophet Muhammad.
- ii. She was afflicted with a lot of physical and mental pain and was beaten and thrown out of Makkah after accepting Islam.

- iii. Even after so much sacrifice she always comforted Prophet Muhammad when he was discouraged or hurt. She loved everyone and had a lively character and due to this she was known as **ندى الكبر** a person who loves.
- iv. After her death, Prophet Muhammad always visited her relatives and friends and whenever he slaughtered an animal, he would always distribute it to them.

3. Zainab (Prophet Muhammad's wife)

- a. Knowledge and wisdom
 - i. She was a great scholar of Islam. We like her because being a woman, she was very knowledgeable and wise. She had a deep understanding of Quranic verses. She was a just woman.
- b. Eradication of social taboos
 - i. She was married to Prophet Muhammad's adopted son Zaid-bin-Harith. After one year of her marriage, she sought divorce from him. She broke social norms by marrying Prophet Muhammad, who according to pre-Islamic traditions was considered as her father-in-law.
- c. Domestic responsibilities
 - i. She was very young when her mother passed away and she took over the responsibility of caring for her father and siblings.

- ii. Even though she had such responsibilities, she never stayed behind in acquiring knowledge and learning about Islam.

4. Fatima Jinnah (Father of the Nation's sister)

a. Brother's role in education

- i. She was Muhammad Ali Jinnah's, also known as Quaid-e-Azam (Father of the Nation [Pakistan]) sister. She was the youngest among her siblings. She lost her mother at the age of two and her father at the age of eight. Muhammad Ali Jinnah raised her and stressed on her education (mostly at home during her early years).

b. Eradication of poverty

- i. She was a dentist but never used her education as a profession or means of making money. She had opened a free clinic for poor and needy patients and treated them with care, affection, compassion, and love. She created working opportunities for women to reduce poverty in rural areas.

c. Women's struggle and equality

- i. Fatima Jinnah's contribution was no less than that of a man or even his brother Muhammad Ali Jinnah and other great leaders in the struggle for Pakistan's independence.
- ii. She was a source of inspiration and a role model for Pakistani women even today. She helped the needy, girls, and women.

- iii. She stressed on women and girls to receive education and established many schools for this purpose.

d. Female Leadership

- i. She was a great leader, who through her speech and actions showed us that we can do everything that men can do with greater affection, dedication, and compassion.
- ii. She was involved in politics as much as her brother Muhammad Ali Jinnah.
- iii. She laid the foundation for All India Muslim Women Students Federation in India and took Quaid-e-Azam's message of freedom to every house. I remember my grandmother stories about Fatima Jinnah. Anyone from the neighborhood or relative who came to my grandmother for resolving some domestic or other issues, she would always take them Fatima Jinnah who listened to each one individually with attention and resolved their problems.
- iv. She ran for the seat of President in the 1965 elections after General Ayub lifted Martial law in Pakistan. This was the first time a woman was nominated as the head of the state. Even though she lost the elections, she made a great impact on Pakistani women because of her dynamic and vibrant character and her enthusiasm for women and girls, especially in rural areas.

v. For the reasons above, she was given the title of خاتونِ پاکستان Lady of

Pakistan and مادرِ ملت Mother of the Nation.

5. Benazir Bhutto (former Prime Minister of Pakistan)

a. Female leadership

- i. She was an intelligent and strong woman who worked hard for Pakistan
- ii. She was a great leader and the first woman to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan
- iii. She was steadfast, daring, and brave, and a role model for us because she became something and showed society that women can occupy such a high position in the government.
- iv. Even though she financially and morally harmed the citizens of Pakistan, we feel that if she did not become Prime Minister, men would have been killing us alive like in Balochistan.
- v. She struggled for our country and loved us. She gave her life for our country when she was assassinated during the election campaign.
- vi. A small stanza:

یہ بازی خون کی بازی ہے،

یہ بازی تم ہی مارو گے،

ہر گھر سے بھٹو نکلے گی،

تم کتنی بھٹو مارو گے

- a. This is a game of blood and you will lose this game
- b. A Bhutto will come from every house
- c. How many Bhuttos will you kill?

6. Mother

a. Role and importance

- i. Mother is a flower that you can
ماں ایک ایسا پھول ہے جو کسی باغ میں نہیں

never find in a garden.

- ii. House is like a graveyard without her.
ماں کے بغیر گھر قبرستان ہے

- iii. She is a great person

b. Compassion, love, sacrifice

- i. The word mother has three letters, each one stands for the
following:

1. The letter م for love

2. The letter ا for sacrifice

3. The letter ن for blessing

c. Quotes a saying of Prophet Muhammad: when God was making mother,

He told the angels to collect the following:

چاند کی ٹھنڈک، شبخیم کے آس، ببل کے نغمے، پکوری کی تڑپ، گلاب کے رنگ، پھول کی مہک،

کونل کی کوک، سمندر کی گہرائی، دریاؤں کی روانی، موجوں کا جوش، مکھٹاں کی رنگینی، زمین کی چمک، صبح

کا نور، سورج کی تمازت

1. Coolness and calmness of the moon, dewdrops, songs of

passerine (bird), anxiety/craving of a *chakori*

(small bird that comes out at night to look at the moon with

total love), color of rose, flower's smell, quail's cry,

ocean's depth, river's flow, power of waves, colorful

galaxies, brightness of the earth, morning light, warmth of

the sun. Then the angels asked God: what did you add from

yourself and God answered love. Thus it is stated that

figuratively God's love is more than that of seventy mothers.

d. Domesticity

- i. She does all the housework such as cooking, washing clothes and dishes, and cleaning.
- ii. She takes care of everything and makes sure that everyone is happy, even if she has to sacrifice for it.
- iii. She binds everyone together and knits the family.
- iv. She works hard to fulfill our father's expectations.
- v. No matter how the children are, mother still loves and takes care of them. Neither can she live without her children nor can the children live without her.

The students were most excited about sharing it with others.

This was something new for us, it was exciting, and it gave each one of us an opportunity to share, even the ones who speak the least said something about our role models.

Some other sixth grade students told me: "This was a great activity and we definitely learned a lot from this and from each other. We wish our teachers would cultivate such things in us." They also acknowledged the influence of male role models in their lives by stating: "Until you asked us, we never realized the influence men have on our lives." In addition to using Freirean and feminist pedagogies for class discussions, dialogues, and

teaching; I asked students to write about their thoughts on different aspects in their lives.

I also gave them an opportunity to use different materials for artwork.

Student Writings

Friere's problem posing and generative theme concepts and Weiler's (1991) feminist pedagogy concepts namely sources of knowledge and truth in personal experiences feelings, and raising questions of difference particularly that of gender, facilitated the process of designing probing questions and statements for students. These were aimed at making the students think critically about issues, customs, and traditions, and relate them to their own lives and community such as what aspects of learning you think occur at home and in school, are there things that make you happy or upset? Significant stories in your life that you want to share or those that have impacted your life, do you feel yourself different from girls who do not attend school? Why or why not?

A total of 65 writings from girls in grades 6-8 on each topic were analyzed. There was a lot of focus on values, ethics, and morals that girls learn at home and in school. In addition, Islamic teachings and role of teachers, parents, grandparents, and siblings appeared in every essay indicating that these people have a significant influence on girls' lives. They could clearly differentiate their practices at home and in school. Students' "trust" towards me (the researcher) was apparent in their writings. They openly wrote about issues in school and aspects that hindered their learning both at home and at school. If they had thought for a second that I may share their writings with school personnel, they would have never written anything like that about the school environment, teachers, and principal. This aspect alone acknowledges the trustworthiness of the researcher.

Girls shared their viewpoints on education and knowledge and how important these were in their lives. In addition, they explained how girls working in the farmlands or taking care of the household were missing out on things in school. They critically narrated their stories and the difference they felt between a girl who was literate and one who was not.

Life Struggles. Students wrote about their lives stating that they are simple people from the village. Two aspects that were mentioned were the importance of being clean and eating a healthy diet. “If I do not have a good diet and eat every day, I will not be able to continue my education.” Approximately forty percent of the students wrote that “we are very poor and only eat once a day. Life is very difficult. If we, our siblings, and parents do not work in the farms, we will not have anything to eat at night.” Some others expressed that “It is very difficult for me to study. Education is very expensive. Our earnings are less and expenditures are more.

بہت مشکل سے گزارہ ہوتا ہے۔ (it is very difficult to survive [make both ends meet])”

They shared their feelings of the need to do something with their lives and with the education they were getting.

We want to do something for our parents and our village. We want to show everyone that girls can become something and stand beside men in every walk of life.

Only I am the one who is studying among us sisters. I want to show everyone, especially my father that girls can do something too. I want to do justice with everyone and not take bribes. I want my mother and father to love me and to understand how I feel.

In addition, many of them wrote that they wanted to help their parents financially when they grow up. I wonder how girls can do this. They will be married off and sent to their husband's homes with a promise to never come back even to visit. How can a girl cut off her blood relationships? How can she not meet or help her parents, who brought her up and sacrificed their wealth, health, and feelings for her? Reading their essays as a feminist, I thought if such feelings only arouse in girls. Perhaps, a reason why many girls wrote that they wanted to become something was firstly to show the society that sending girls to school and spending on their education will eventually be returned back in some form to the village/community/society. Secondly, girls' earning and financial help will better the living conditions of her parents and family. Even though girls have such goals for themselves, it is hard to imagine if they would be able to come out of the working class environment since bureaucracy and feudalism forces them to remain within those boundaries.

Ambitions and goals. At least ninety percent of the students wrote that they wanted to study more if they were given the means for it. Living as a poor, most of them felt their responsibility to become a professional such as a doctor, lawyer, or a person in military and help the poor, needy, and the children in the village and their community. In addition they expressed that they wanted to protect their country and serve the nation. "I want to become a doctor so I can open up a hospital in my village and fulfill my rights and responsibilities to this village."

Want to go in the military (army or air force), so I can have some power to give people their rights and do justice with them. I watch Kashmiri reporter a lot and see the brutality of the Indians. Tears come into my eyes when I see this and pray

to Allah to make me a person who can give peace to such people and grant them their rights.

Want to become a lawyer like Quaid-e-Azam (father of the nation[Muhammad Ali Jinnah]) so I can remove the ignorance from people's minds, give people their rights, be just, and distinguish truth from falsehood.

Become like Allama Iqbal (Pakistan's famous philosopher and poet), write poetry and lift the veil of ignorance from people's hearts and minds. I want to help others.

Students' critical thinking appeared in their writings. In the above snippets it was very apparent. They felt, through our discussions and questioning of people's roles and living conditions in the society that people are ignorant and their minds are overshadowed. Girls felt the need to lift this ignorance and be the source of providing justice, peace, tranquility, and rights. It was interesting to note that none of the girls wrote or shared that they wanted to become a teacher. This attested to the fact that teachers' disinterest towards instruction and learning had a major impact on girls' lives. They did not feel their teachers as role models for them.

Literate vs. illiterate. This piece of writing in particular was an important example of critical literacy and consciousness. Even though it took girls sometime to respond to this statement, yet they were able to think and write critically about it, showing that if girls are given a chance for critical consciousness, they would be able to overcome their challenges. Students were able to clearly differentiate a literate person from an illiterate. “زمین اور آسمان کا فرق ہے” totally opposite of each other. Girls articulated

their thoughts well about the difference they felt between a literate person and an illiterate person. They wrote that a literate person is well aware of her/his surroundings, can express different viewpoints and understand those of others. In addition, such a person is confident about herself/himself, well respected, can take care of the problems and resolve them, takes responsibility, values time, and most importantly understands his “*deen*” (religion) and tries to live by it as well. She/he is always successful in life “کامیابی ہمیشہ ان

” کے قدم چومتی ہے

On the other hand, an illiterate person is always dependent on others, is ignorant of things around him, has a limited life, and is bound by his own viewpoints and thinking. In addition, such a person can live his life but does not know how to live life to its fullest or the proper way of living a life (follows norms and traditions but does not know why she/he is doing it).

”زندگی تو گزار لیتا ہے لیکن زندگی گزارنے کے طور طریقے نہیں جانتا ہے“

One of the important questions that girls addressed were:

”ہر کام کرنے کی کوشش کرتا ہے پر تعلیم کیوں نہیں حاصل کر سکتا“ if an illiterate person can try to do

everything, why can't she/he gain knowledge and become educated?

Stories. Students wrote interesting stories and most of them related to their challenges overcoming cultural issues to attend school. They mentioned their desire to

study despite the physical conditions in the school and the village. These stories reflect and express girls' critical thinking, their experiences, and feelings. Some of their stories are given below:

I used to live in Multan (city, 70 miles distance) before. There was no middle school near our house so it was very difficult for us sisters to study. Four of my sisters did not study at all, while one of sister and I finished primary school. I wanted to study more but the only option for me was to come to the village. So I live with my uncle and go to school here. Even though it is not the best school that I had imagined, I thank Allah that at least I am going to school every day. My parents visit me sometimes or I go with my uncle to Multan. Now that this school is only till eighth grade, I do not know whether I will be able to study any further.

Life in village is really slow and boring. It's not the same as in the city. If I want to study in the night, electricity goes away. There is always a very faint light for me to study, the only source of light in the whole house. How can everyone do their things in only one light? I think girls in the village do not have the same mindset as those in the city. We do not have sharp minds, cannot ask questions, and be brave enough to deal with the life in this village. There are many problems in this village but I have to stay here, get married here, so I try to live as my father likes, otherwise I will not be able to study.

Mother's love and encouragement for the girls to study and move forward was another common story that girls wrote about.

My father is a truck driver, always travels from Karachi to Lahore (900 miles). He only comes to the house for a day or two. We cannot expect him to do anything for us. It is very hard for my mother, who works in the farm during mornings taking my little brother and sister with her and comes back after we return from school. It's a long day for her. She is tired, frustrated, and sometimes angry for having to do so much work in the farms and then taking care of everything in the house also. She never gets credit for what she does. Even when my father comes for a day or two, we do not see any love for my mother or for us. He has no time to help me in my education or even ask me how my school is going or what I am learning. It is only because of my mother that I go to school every day. She is the source of my encouragement and confidence. May God give such a mother to everyone.

Student Artifacts

In addition to the creativity and artwork incorporated in other subject areas such as math, social studies, science, and Islamic studies; I also gave them various materials for drawing. Art is a medium that provides students the flexibility and opportunity to express themselves without having to use language and text. Using aesthetics to incorporate aspects of feminist pedagogy such as gender equity and creative energy in providing a liberatory learning environment seemed necessary for my participating girl students.

As a first assignment, students were divided into groups of their own choices and were given colored charts papers, markers, colored pencils, rice, and glue. I used wheat, a staple crop for Pakistan, because it is one of the major crops of Punjab province, where my research was conducted. I provided them freedom to use the materials to be creative, thereby not forcing them to draw on a particular topic. It is interesting to observe that each of their drawings had glasses and plates, similar to students in my pilot study. The groups sat in different places of the room, some on the floor, while others on benches. As I walked in the room, facilitating their work, I saw that when students from other groups approached another group, they would quickly hide their work. This indicated that each group had its own ideas, yet the results showed their similarities. I asked them to share why they had all thought so similarly, and the only answer I received in response was:

We felt plates and glasses were important because sometimes we do not eat twice a day. It felt necessary to remind ourselves about the need for food, and also thank Allah for His blessings on us, for giving us food to eat, and for providing us the opportunity to study unlike many others in our village.

This statement had so much depth and meaning to it. Survival, shelter, and food, the basic necessities of human beings are vital for people in the village. Even though they come to school and eat at least once a day, yet every day is a new day, and there have been many instances where such issues of survival have hindered a girl to attend school regularly.

I also asked students to use illustrations to compare and contrast the role and status of women in the society and in Islam. Out of a total of 75 girls in my classroom, only 5 (6%) attempted to draw something. All five of them depicted a picture of a girl whose hair is long and messy. She has an ugly face with torn clothing. Some drew fire around the girl, while the rest showed her as cheap labor working on the farmland, in the house, and rearing babies. I asked them to interpret their pictures to me and to write anything that came to their mind that could help me understand their drawings. They wrote:

A woman is battered, insulted, and rejected for everything she does. A woman has no life in our society. Why is she married so early and thrown in the fire (refers to her husband and his family? They do not respect her or love her the way they should, instead exploit her, abuse her, and burden. She reproduces children but is never able to make them as she likes. An uneducated woman can never be free and successful in raising her children well nor can she help herself.

Students were also asked to draw their ambitions and goals. Most of them as indicated above in the student writings section wrote and drew themselves in different professions such as a nurse, doctor, pilot, in armed forces. 95% drew a female doctor wearing a long white coat and stethoscope. The rest of the 5% drew the following: (1) pilot with a plane, (2) police girl, (3) a girl in army or air force, and (4) nurse. Each drawing had several things in common: (1) red lipstick, (2) red nail polish on finger and toe nails, (3) colored big heel shoes, (4) pants and long shirt (usually red or green/yellow in color), (5) long earrings, and (6) some had a *duppatta* (head covering), while others did not. Figure 21 illustrates the drawings of a doctor, nurse, girl in military/armed forces, and pilot. Those that did not had hair tied up or long open hair. Thus it was very apparent that their drawings had gender stereotypes embedded. They had high expectations from themselves in order to prove to their parents, particularly fathers that girls can do something with their education. If girls are provided inspiration with critical thinking and the financial means, they would certainly work hard to accomplish their ambitions and dreams.



Figure 21: Student drawings, from left to right: doctor, nurse, girl in armed forces, and pilot

Impact of Curriculum

Implementing the critical literacy curriculum was a way to provide for gender equity, social change and action. Using both the Freirean and feminist pedagogies, I was able to develop the teacher-student and student-teacher relationships, collaboration and cooperation with students (Freire, 1996). It felt as if I knew each student individually and could care and show compassion on an individual as well as on a collective basis. Each student's story was different and important for me, it brought with itself a perspective that was layered within a cultural framework (Casey, 1996), social language, and complexity. It provided me meaning and a way to understand the students. Every day, a few students stayed back and told me stories about their lives, their work on the

farmlands, and sometimes simply had a conversation. We used to eat lunch together, sharing from a common plate. One of girls labeled “*nikami*” stated:

Probably you will not remember this, but we will remember this for the rest of our lives . . . crying . . . we could never cross the line of control and power of our teacher. We have never had any teacher sit and eat with us. This was an experience of a lifetime for all of us. Please come back and visit us again.

It took simple and personable actions to make an impact on the students. Tangible small steps that I probably did not realize will have a great impact on students’ lives were aspects of care and compassion of an educator who wanted to put a smile on girls faces to make their learning fun and enjoyable.

Using the pedagogies and integrating it with the Islamic component, provided my students and I to discuss and dialogue about gender inequities, social and cultural issues, and how they compared with the rights of women in Islam. In addition, we were able to challenge and question the knowledge in the textbooks, pedagogical process of teachers, and the dominant forces of power in the village. Students comments and quotes regarding the impact of the curriculum on their lives made we feel there was some action, be it small, with my research.

1. “I enjoyed learning, it was fun. I did not have to be ‘disruptive’ like my teacher says to have some fun.”
2. “You taught us in a way that we did not even feel that we were studying. I loved the group work.”
3. “I wish our teachers teach us with so much care and love. You took interest in each one of us and knew exactly which neighborhood we were coming from.”

4. “It is hard to find people like you. I am not sure if you will miss us but we will miss you immensely.”
5. “I do not feel the need to memorize. I will remember the activities and the formula whenever I have to solve geometry questions.”
6. “It’s as if our eyes have been opened. I did not know that a teacher can leave such a mark on our hearts.”
7. “You helped us look at ourselves and our lives. We thought girls are not worth anything. You gave us a picture of ourselves that we can look up to and practice in our houses.”

Ninety five percent of the girls wrote and stated in their narratives that that they wished their school was up to 10th grade, indicating their love for learning “کاش ہمارا اسکول

”دسویں جماعت تک ہوتا I was in continuous contact with the school district on the phone after my return to United States. I had provided reports, my preliminary findings, and documentary to the district about my visits to the school and the village. In addition, during my conversations with political and religious leaders, I had put forth the need for adding grades nine and ten in the school. Of course, there were considerations about constructing new building, hiring a second principal and staff that were provided as excuses for not increasing the grades. The principal and her brother-in-law had made several attempts as well to create a dialogue with the district office about the addition of grades nine and ten. When I entered the school premises in 2009, I saw a structure being

built for the grades nine and ten. I feel this to be the most profound impact of my research. I had not even imagined that there would have been a possibility for girls to study beyond eighth grade in the same school, I had to rub my eyes and tell myself “this is real” every time I saw the construction. Girls were full of joy and excitement, particularly those who were sitting at home or working in farmlands after having completed eighth grade.

Conclusion

It is evident from the data analysis and interpretation that social and cultural practices, customs, and traditions in the village lead to low girls’ literacy and enrollment. Father’s role, patriarchal and hegemonic structures, and survival issues force girls and women to work in the farmlands or do domestic, unpaid work. In addition, teachers’ attitude, school environment, and a traditional pedagogical process create an atmosphere of disinterest for learning within girls.

Critical literacy and learning facilitated the process of moving from reflection to action. The framework and pedagogies allowed me to integrate the national curriculum and traditional content with arts, creativity, storytelling, and students’ lived experiences in and across different subject matters. Critical literacy became a powerful and an encompassing tool for learning that encouraged students to express their opinions and voices in both oral and written ways. This pedagogical process helped facilitate student choice and creative work, irrespective of their ages and context. It not only helped them students think critically, but made them consciously reflection their own learning, textbooks, and teachers’ style of instruction. Thus, it was important to make them

question what they were learning so as to broaden their thinking about the inequities the society.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter comprises of five sections. The first section provides an overview of my dissertation study including the research methods, causes of literacy, forms of literacy, and impact of the critical literacy curriculum guidelines. The second section explores the contributions that my study has made to: (1) female education and girls' literacy in developing countries, (3) social and cultural issues in South-East Asia, (4) curriculum theory and practice, (5) and use of narrative research in developing countries. The third section outlines aspects of future research. The fourth section details the implications of my study for (1) educational leaders, and (2) policy makers. Finally the fifth section provides trustworthiness of my dissertation study.

Overview of Study

Context

Pakistan has a population of 167 million, sixty-eight percent live in rural areas, while thirty-two percent in urban, with a literacy rate of 49.9%. Pakistan's education budget remains below 2.5 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) indicating the government's disinterest in increasing literacy. Education has been a priority in Pakistan's official documents, policies, and five-year plans, but little effects have been observed since 60 years of its independence from the Indian sub-continent.

As a result, even in 2008 more than 52 million people in Pakistan remain illiterate with a female literacy rate of 35% (UNESCO, 2008), that drops between 15% and 20% in rural areas. Pakistan's constitution is based on the principles and teachings of Islam as outlined in the Quran (Holy Scripture in Arabic language), and life of Prophet Muhammad. Women have been granted many rights in Islam, including right to pursue an education, inheritance, business/trade and property ownership, among other rights. A woman's lower status and oppression due to customary practices and norms restricts her role in society, forcing her to work as cheap labor on farmlands, reproduce, and manage the household.

There have been many studies conducted by international agencies and a few local non-governmental organizations and institutes, but they have been limited to producing fact, figures, and statistics about the status of literacy in Pakistan. There continues to be a lack in the scholarship and research on female education and girls' literacy in Pakistan. In addition, relationships between social and cultural norms and low girls' literacy and enrollment, particularly in rural areas have not been sufficiently addressed. Educational leaders and policy makers have yet to understand girls' perspectives and forms of literacy that girls adapt to in their lives, and implement a curriculum that fulfills girls' needs.

My study aimed at understanding the issues of increasing girls' illiteracy and low school enrollment, thereby addressing the gap in research on female education in Pakistan. In addition, I designed and implemented critical literacy guidelines based on the premises of Freirean and feminist pedagogies that implicitly focused on women's rights

in Islam in a government rural girls' school in central Pakistan. Through these guidelines, I attempted to question and challenged the status quo, socio-cultural norms, and deeply rooted traditions that hindered girls' from attending schools.

Research Methods

My dissertation used three research methods namely: case study, narrative research, and feminist action research with an overarching feminist research epistemology. Feminist research provided me multiple ways to critique, challenge, and question status quo and social practices, while recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed with an underlying and hidden interest of bureaucracy, patriarchy, and other dominant forces (Reinharz, 1992, HesseBiber, 2007). Feminist scholars including, Lather (1988) and Anzaldúa (1987) have emphasized the need for research to be praxis-oriented, critical, one that commits to critiquing status quo and develops critical consciousness in order to accept and reject structural inequities. Thus, in this light, feminist research allowed me to give voice to 40 complex, diverse, and multifaceted realities of women and girls in rural Pakistan. I was able to use reflexivity to deconstruct power, knowledge, social condition, and the traditional method of education. While recognizing invisible barriers of power and multiple perspectives of my participants, I engaged in dialogues and discussions with myself and my 59 participants, questioning my own perspective, agendas and positionality, especially related to my own socio-cultural, religious, and political environments. Feminist framework made my research process interactive, reflective, and non-hierarchical. Thus, I was able to accomplish my aim of creating a “dialogic, dialectically educative encounter”; in addition, to a sense of inquiry disrupting

sources and processes of knowledge production, power, hierarchy, and privilege for a better understanding of women's status in the context of broader social structure, relations, and globalization.

Case study has been established as an interdisciplinary methodology with a long and distinguished history. Cresswell (2006) describes case study methodology as a "bounded system" overtime employing multiple sources of data collection. Using Cresswell's methodology, I was able to situate the context of my case by paying close attention to the physical, social, historical, and economic aspects. By illustrating the issues of girls and women, I was able to accomplish the "uniqueness" of the case that Cresswell has established (p. 62).

Narrative research was used primarily for data collection. Listening and analyzing people's life stories. It allowed me to make sense of people's lives, and gain access to multiple perspectives of reality (Casey, 1993; 1996). Furthermore, narrative research allowed me to authentically present girls' experiences, issues, and concerns in and after school. I used Riessman's (1993) five levels of approaching narrative research, in addition to Casey's four ways to analyze narratives: selectivity, slippage, silence, and intertextuality.

My data was collected in two stages from May 2007 to March 2009 in central Pakistan. I collected a total of 59 interviews of girls, women, fathers, principal, teachers, political, religious, and educational leaders. These interviews were audio or video recorded and imported in qualitative software, QSR NVivo 8.0, to aid the analysis process. This software allowed me to listen and code videos and audios without having to

transcribe and translate into English. In addition, I was able to document my observations in a journal. Photographs of the school facility, students, girls, and women in farmlands helped me understand the culture and capturing the assumed social practices in the village. 150 student essays on different topics, 20 artifacts, and 25 group work products helped me realize the impact of my critical literacy guidelines.

Understanding Literacy and its Causes

My study identified six major factors that affect literacy and enrollment of girls, particularly in rural areas namely: (1) social and cultural norms, (2) value of education, (3) school's physical facility, (4) availability of resources, (5) school and home environment, and (6) economic needs of citizens. In addition to these factors, through the narratives, interviews, observations, discussion, and dialogue, I was able to deeply explore the social norms and practices that are a part of the village's culture. There were eleven norms and practices that were identified by my study that hinder girls access to education and schools.

Forms of Literacy

Girls' narratives revealed a marked difference between the literacy practices at school and those at home. Even though girls were "learning and adapting" to certain values, moral, and gender stereotyping, each aspect had a different twist at home and in schools. Teacher's authority and an imposed schedule further emphasized the need for control, power, and the maintenance of social order in the village. Girls were learning different skills at home such as cooking, sewing, embroidery, artwork that were ignored at school. In addition, girls felt that they had to give the knowledge that they were

obtaining back to the village in some form. Thus, they were putting their literacy abilities to use: reading utility bills, magazines, newspapers, developing literacy ability among their younger siblings, and calculating product quantity and money for their fathers and brothers.

Critical Literacy Curriculum

Use of Freirean and feminist pedagogy allowed me to understand my students at an individual level. Furthermore, the pedagogies created a sense of inquiry among students where they were able to question and critically think about their school, home, and farm experiences. An implicit focus on women's rights in Islam and the Islamic way of teaching helped me distinguish between culture and the religious interpretations of the scholars in the village. Use of the pedagogies in creating discussion and dialogue facilitated a bond where I was able to practice Freire's (1996) student-teacher and teacher-student relationship. This relationship was risky at first, yet unique for students who could not have casual conversations with their teachers. I was able to challenge the concept of teacher's authority and control with an enthusiasm and curiosity among girls about their learning.

It was the use of art as a medium of conversation that helped me understand what girls considered vital and important in their lives. Through art and free writing, they were able to convey their role in society, admit the dominant forces that restrict them to attend schools, and acknowledge the efforts of women role models in their lives. The impact of the curriculum was most apparent in girls' conversations about their experiences and the

way they were able to distinguish the pedagogical process of their teachers to the one I practiced in their classroom.

Contributions

My study contributes to several bodies of knowledge and areas that have been ignored, limited or not been sufficiently been addressed in literature particularly in the areas of (1) female education and girls' literacy in developing countries, (2) social and cultural issues in South-East Asia, (3) curriculum theory and practice, (4) use of narrative research in developing countries.. These contributions have implications for educational leaders and policy makers in developing countries.

Female Education and Girls' Literacy in Developing Countries

Female education and girls' literacy in developing countries has been an under explored body of knowledge. International agencies such as United Nations, USAID have provided funds and resources for the study of literacy including that of girls in order to produce facts and figures that are much questionable. These agencies have been involved since Pakistan's independence in 1947 to help provide free, basic education for all school aged children, however even today only 15-20% of Pakistani girls and women are literate. Thus, achieving educational access for girls still remains a challenge for Pakistan and many other developing countries. My study has provided a detailed history and analysis of the current status of girls' literacy in Pakistan, in addition to encompassing a much broader and holistic approach to the study of literacy in a developing country such as Pakistan.

Social and Cultural Issues in South-East Asia

My study provided eleven aspects of social and cultural issues affecting girls and women in Pakistan. These issues are common to other countries comprising of South-East Asia as well such as India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. These countries, including Pakistan were a part of British colonialism for several hundred years. Thus as a result, many of the systems, values, morals, and ethics that were imposed by the British are still prevalent in some form in these countries, as indicated by my findings. Further, my study was able to distinguish religious teachings from cultural values. Women and girls have borne the brunt of societal conditions, and have been expected to perform several duties namely housework, work on farmlands, producing and rearing children that have forced her to maintain a lower status, become submissive and subdued in society. These practices have been a part of people's lives in South-East Asia for centuries and will continue to exist, particularly in rural areas. However, my study has provided a different perspective to challenging these social practices i.e. involving in discussions and dialogues on these difficult issues with a few people that control the culture in the country. Thus, my study contributes to the literature on social and cultural issues and also provides useful accounts of interactive discussion and dialogue that lend to some betterment of women's status and role in society.

Curriculum Theory and Practice

Freire's critical literacy curriculum and feminist pedagogies offered a rich blend of theory and practice to the rural elementary/middle school in central Pakistan. Even though these pedagogies have been used in developing countries and with women

working in farmlands, these have never been integrated with Islamic teachings for implementation in a school. My study provides scholars an avenue to rethink the meaning of literacy and understand the need to listen to students' stories and narratives to shape the learning process. In this light researchers and scholars need to question the way in which we learn from the multiple perspectives of our students' stories, whose knowledge we respect and in what ways, which knowledge seeks to control and dominate us and in what ways, and how and in what ways we can use literacy for creating consciousness, awareness, social change, and action. My study indicates what critical literacy and Freirean pedagogy looks like and how it can be used in complex and very different settings and educational contexts (Comber and Kamler, 1997).

Traditional methods of teaching are a norm in many countries around the world. It is important for us to consider, discuss, and dialogue about the way in which power is exercised through teacher's instructional style, textbooks, and practices that oppress students. My study has shown that providing students the freedom to learn helps them gain better understanding of the concepts, making teacher a facilitator rather than the knowledge giver. Thus, through my study, I found that Freire's (1973) approach to critical literacy was effective for teaching students of varying ages, abilities, and experience. It was important to listen to their lived experiences in a way that encouraged critical reflection and question the inequities in their lives. All activities focus on active participation.

Critical literacy lends itself to an on-going scholarly research of curriculum theory and practice. Teachers and educational leaders can only begin to see the impact it may

have on children in schools, particularly those in rural areas. According to Schissler (2006), “A new knowledge frame that is more conducive to the ambiguities and the complexities of the world needs to be developed...” Similar to Schissler, I believe that we can make way for critical literacy and new knowledge if we can uncover the potential that lies within our students, understand and listen to their lived experiences, and become more accepting of the multiple sources of knowledge, and take action in a variety of ways, even if they are small steps.

Use of Multi-method Research in Developing Countries

Narrative research and feminist epistemology have been much neglected, particularly in developing countries and it has yet to reveal its importance as a data collection method. Narrative research lends itself to collecting and analyzing people’s life stories and in understanding their cultural frameworks (Casey, 1996, Riessman, 1993). As shown through my study, the use of feminist and narrative research helped me listen to the silenced voices of girls and women. They were able to share their perspectives, viewpoints, and experiences in a way that had never been done before. Initially, it was very difficult for them to trust me, but working with them for hours, visiting them every day, shadowing them, and returning every now and then to talk to them allowed them to trust me and to share their life stories with me. Both research methods helped me in gaining a holistic and a deeper understanding of women’s lives and was not only limited to a few questions. It has implications for educational leaders and policy makers to understand and fulfill the curricular needs of girls and women in Pakistan.

Implications of Study

The study has implications for teachers, principals, curriculum developers, textbook boards, and policy makers. The positive outlook and experience of girls throughout the research process implies that if similar provisions can be developed for different areas in Pakistan, girls' morals and energies can be lifted and an interest can be developed for them to learn and prosper.

Educational Leaders

My study has implications for educational leaders in many aspects. Firstly, the use of narratives to understand the literacy needs of girls. Many literacy scholars such as Bateson (1997) have linked survival (physical, emotional, historical, and cultural) through personal story as a form of literacy. Survival is a complex issue that rural students go through every day of their lives. Communicating with students through their stories and narratives and understanding their social and cultural context aides the process of learning and literacy. In order to shape knowledge, identity, change, and social reform, it is important to create a sense of belonging, where each student is recognized as a full participant and whole person in the research process. Thus, in order to learn, create awareness, change, and social action, it is vital to look into and draw upon our own knowledge sources as educators and that of girls' through their narratives and stories. According to Goldstein (1997), the act of telling stories seems "inextricably linked with the act of making meaning, an inevitable part of life in a . . . postmodern world" and this becomes even more problematic "when its influence on thinking and perception goes unnoticed" or is ignored (pg. 147). Therefore, it seems necessary for educational leaders

to understand literacy through personal and communal meaning, acknowledge multiple sources of knowledge, and take action based upon it.

Secondly, it seems vital to recognize the multiple forms of literacy that girls experience and practice in their lives every day. Understanding these literary practices, morals, values, and ethics that girls continuously learn are important to allow for any change and to challenge these values and morals they are adapting with at home and in school. In addition, several other aspects such as listening to grandparents stories and experiences, girls' use of their literacy abilities, and girls' positive outlook towards their learning that need to be emphasized and build upon in the teaching and pedagogical process.

Thirdly, the lack of teaching resources and appropriate school environment identified by girls makes it even more important for educational leaders to make sure that students' learning is made interesting. In addition, students should enjoy coming to school and leaders should make an attempt to provide an environment that encourages learning through the use of materials and other learning resources.

Fourthly, the curriculum itself should not be limited to textbooks. It should address the gender and social inequities present in the textbooks to broaden students' outlook, create a sense of inquiry, and develop critical thinking skills among students. Thus, educational leaders can provide training to teachers based upon the findings of this study and prepare them to address such inequities, ethics, and morals with students.

Fifthly, my study has pointed how little education is valued by parents, particularly fathers, political, and religious leaders. It becomes incumbent upon

educational leaders to create ways in order to convince and help such stakeholders in to provide girls access to an equitable education. Financial support and flexible time schedules are only two of the many ways that may be used to help parents value their girls' education. In addition, financial support alone, without any efforts or endeavor to improve the current status of literacy may not facilitate the process.

Many centuries ago, Middle Eastern poet, Rumi, asked, "Of these two thousand "I" and "we" people, which am I"? (Rumi, 1995, p.12) The contemporary bilingual poet, Francisco X. Alarcón, asks us if we can "... hear the voices between these lines?" (Alarcón, 1997, p. 28). Even though, literacy scholars have used these to describe the importance of immigrants and diversity in the western world. I believe that listening to the silenced voices of girls and women are vital for any literacy endeavor to occur in Pakistan.

In conclusion, it is vital for educators to understand the social and cultural context of their students in order to make an impact on their lives. Islamic teachings and a focus on women's right is an important way educators can address the need for providing equal educational access to girls and understanding the importance of a woman in their lives, in their community, and society. Even though it will take years and decades to change the thinking of people, yet creating the pathway towards it requires smaller steps by educators.

Policy Makers

The western world, media, and government have politicized the case of female literacy and women's issues in developing countries and at the same time provided

superficial programs, policies, reforms, and resources that have not penetrated down to the schools. Yet, when I listened to and read stories of girls and women, their silenced voices and stories were layered with complex issues that were of great importance for social reformers, activists, and policy makers. Even though many may label my experience as social romanticism, I believe that in my four years of working with and shadowing girls and women in farmlands and homes, I have observed and experienced many situations and circumstances where I had to stop, think, and rethink my research methods in order to create small, yet tangible steps in building upon my students' lived experiences and sources of knowledge.

Girls' narratives identified many aspects that require consideration from policy makers and reformers. The need for qualified teachers is inevitable. Teachers who have been trained in the same kind of educational system prefer to practice their pedagogy in a similar manner, without understanding the needs of their students in today's globalized world. Policy makers need to reconsider the training, education, and qualification required from teachers to enter into this noble profession. Teachers neither want to admit nor are they prepared to deal with girls facing survival issues every day and following the implicit patriarchal mode of life. It is vital for policy makers to address the issue quality when it comes to teachers and making an appropriate benchmark for teacher certification programs and institutes, which in itself are a handful in Pakistan.

Girls also identified the need of a proper physical school facility, lack of gas, electricity, clean water, playground, latrines/bathrooms, and the long distance of the school as important for their parents to send them to school. Policy makers and political

leaders need to examine these aspects and give them due attention in order to increase the literacy rate of girls in rural areas of Pakistan.

My study indicates that there are apparent gender inequities in the curriculum and textbooks that lower the morale of girls and make them disinterested in their own learning. Revising the material, language, pictures, and use of scenarios and stories in the textbook to address and perhaps remove the inequities seems vital for any change to occur in the literacy rate of girls and women. In addition, textbook boards, policy makers, educators, teachers, principals, parents, and students need to come together on the same platform to discuss the changes to the textbooks and curriculum.

Girls and women face survival issues, work on the farmlands as cheap labor, and take care of the household. What are they given in return, a few dollars, disrespect, oppression, and a lower status? What have the policy makers done for women, provided a few seats for women in the parliament, and made a woman as prime minister twice? What are some of measures the government has taken to reduce the financial burden from its people? The provision of Rs. 1000 to every poor family limited to 500 families in each district and stipends to students from grades 6-10, is very less to address these major challenges in their lives. Reforms to improve the living condition of the citizens of Pakistan need to be made in conjunction with providing education for all.

Future Research

Due to the recent increase in globalization and international attention to literacy in developing countries, my research has prospects for future research and study. In addition to in-depth studies of literacy in different parts of the world, my research can be

expanded to include a comparative study with other neighboring countries, where literacy rates are particularly low. Female education can be explored in the Muslim world such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia to name a few. Girls' literacy varies in urban areas and in the different provinces of Pakistan. Future research may be conducted in urban areas and other provinces to see why literacy rates are higher, such as in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta, or lower, as in the Balochistan and North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P) provinces. What are some of the other social and cultural issues that women and girls face in the mountainous areas of Pakistan?

Listening to grandparent's stories and further expanding on the home and family literacy practices may shed light on the preferences of parents to send their girls to school. Use of qualitative research methods has enriched my study by providing readers authentic voice of my participants. In addition, use of video and voice at the stage of analysis was able to preserve the context, culture, and richness of the interviewing environment, without having the need to transcribe and translate. Future research may explore and expand on the use of such innovative tools to enhance the analysis of qualitative data.

Critical literacy curriculum and feminist pedagogy has much potential in developing countries, if it is adapted to the needs of the community and students. Implementing the guidelines designed in this study in other parts of the country may be an aspect of future research as well. Developing principal and teacher training programs may help in implementing the curriculum guidelines in many parts of the country. Two aspects that had been undertaken but were not part of my dissertation include the

following: children's narratives and health conditions of women affecting their involvement in the society.

Children's Narratives

Girls' narratives have been very informative and rich in many forms. They not only provided the social context and culture of the village, the narratives were also useful in shedding light on the school environment, teacher's attitude towards student learning, and working in the farmlands, and the home expectations. Conversing with the editor of a weekly children magazine (regional bureau of a national daily newspaper, Nawa-i-Waqt), I expressed my positive experience with girls narratives. He provided me an opportunity to conduct competitions for story writing, essay writing, or drawing/artwork in the children's magazines. The advertisements were published in the magazine on February 17 and 24, 2009. The topic for story writing was "effect of education, poverty, unemployment, and culture in our lives", for essay writing was "importance and problems of girls' education", and children could depict a drawing of either one of the topics stated above. The children were allowed to participate in more than one category. There were a total of 54 entries received by the magazine. Out of these 35 were from girls and 19 were from boys, aged 7-14 years, of varying education and socio-economic status. They belonged to both urban and rural areas in the region.

Three winners from each category were selected independently by the editorial board and staff of the children's magazine. These children were provided certificates, trophies, and books as prizes in a ceremony on March 6, 2009. I had provided financial

support to conduct this competition. Analysis of these narratives, essays, and drawings would serve the basis of future research.

Women's Health Issues

During my visit to the school and village every day, I would pass by a small government's basic health unit. One male doctor and two female nurses/social workers were available to deal with minor medical issues and any other health related problems in the vicinity. After my research process had been completed, I spent a week at the basic health. Women, girls, and young children were the major users of the center. I observed women, listened to their narratives, discussed their issues, and shadowed the social workers. Future research may look at women's health issues and problems as they intertwine with social norms and girls' literacy. Thus several avenues can be explored as possible topics for future research

Trustworthiness of Study

Trustworthiness is a vital part of any qualitative study. It is particularly needed to support the findings, maintain credibility, and acknowledge that the interpretations are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pg. 290). Cresswell (2006) suggests several ways to increase trustworthiness of a qualitative study such as triangulation, memoing, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, and member checking. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four issues that researchers need to pay attention to namely: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

In order to build credibility of my study I used triangulation and member checking. Triangulation implies that data themes and patterns for interpretation are derived from multiple sources. I used girls' and women's narratives, interviews and discussions with political, religious, and educational leaders, interviews with teachers and principal, observations, and journal entries to enhance the credibility of my study. In addition, member checking provides another way to increase trustworthiness and credibility of the study. I was able to discuss my preliminary findings and emerging themes with my participants in person and on the phone upon my return.

Transferability

Transferability ensures that findings of the study can be applied or transferred beyond the bounds of the study. A detailed description of my methods and analysis in chapters 5 and 6 have been presented in a way that any other researcher or scholar who wants to transfer my conclusions, apply my methodology, or perhaps repeat the study in a similar setting will be able to find common themes and patterns as explained in my study.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability assesses the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and/or theory generation. Confirmability is a measure of how well the findings are supported by the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to address these, I used rich and thick descriptions of my research context and analysis. Risking my life to explore certain areas in the village, quotations and descriptions of my discussion and dialogue with my research participants, and girls' writings attest to the quality of my

research process and confirm my findings. In addition, I had a prolonged engagement with my research participants between May 2007 to March 2009, allowing myself and my participants them enough time to understand the research process and reflect upon their involvement.

Conclusion

Subjectivity was inevitable, having a strong grasp on it helped me in navigating my different identities, while being aware of my participants' socio-cultural context at all times. There were many instances as described in my experiences that I did not know how to react, but I was well aware of my own perspectives that could eventually affect the study. Reflexivity provided a more thought provoking and intensive process for me to dialogue with myself as well as with my participants in order to provide meaning and clear understanding of a circumstance/situation. This process, even though did not make everything transparent, it did however provide me a strong standing on who I am, why I think a certain way, and why I should listen to the multiple perspectives of my participants.

The dissertation study has addressed an important issue of girls' literacy that is of significance to the international community and educators. In addition, I was able to address the impact of social and cultural issues on girls' and women's lives and the manner in which they hinder a girls' access to education and literacy. Further, the design and implementation of curriculum guidelines positively impacted girls' lives and has placed a challenge to educators in rural areas and in developing countries as well. This

research has practical and theoretical implications and contributions for educational leaders, policy makers, social reformers, activists, and citizens.

On the last day of my work at the school, I brought some snacks and cake, giving us a moment to ponder about our relationship. I also thought that this act from me would blur the line between a teacher and a student, thereby making us both accept each other as learners and partners of their journey to attaining literacy. There were tears in their eyes when they saw me leaving and asked “when will you come back to see us again”. I was filled with tears myself. It was an experience of a lifetime for me working and interacting in so many different roles in girls’ lives . . . a confidant, a teacher, a friend, a visitor, a stranger . . . to go beyond the needs of research and profession, to bring about some change, to put a smile on their faces, and to feel their plight and needs.

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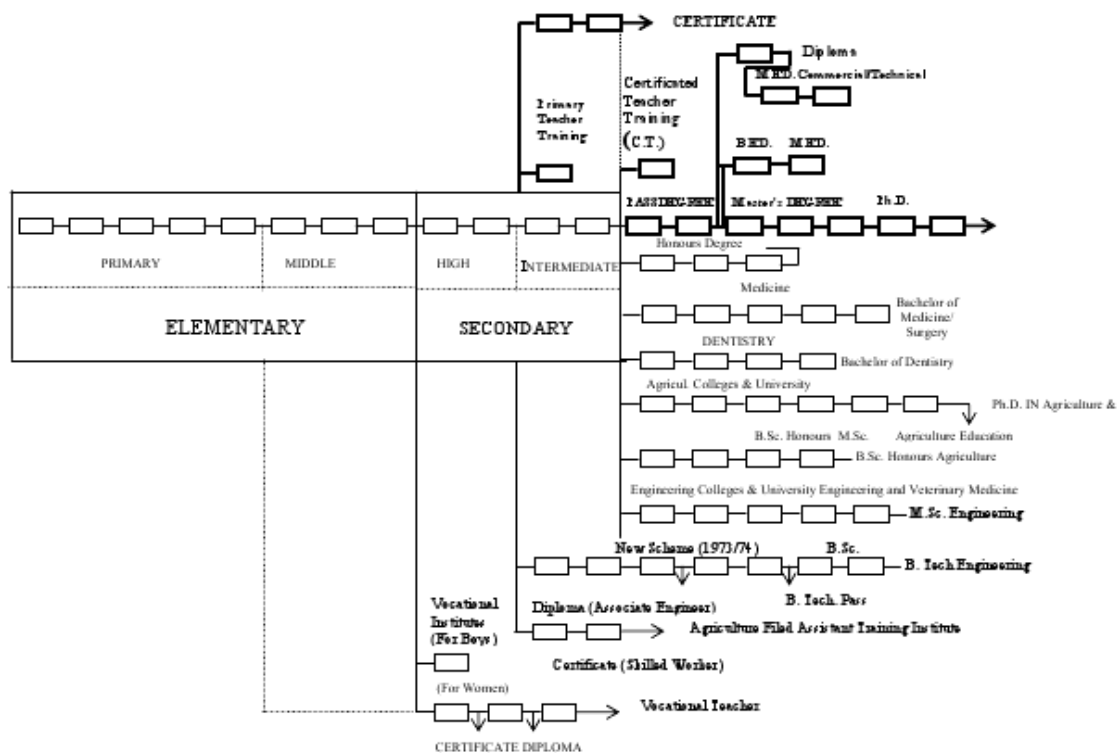
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APPENDIX A. EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE OF PAKISTAN

(Education Census, 2005)

STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN (FORMAL ONLY)

Grade	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV	XV	XVI
Age	5/6	6/7	7/8	8/9	9/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21



Note: Degree programme, which used to be of two years duration, is currently in transitional stage, initially switching over to four years duration for professional degrees of BBA, BCS, BSc, BIT etc.

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Girls

Before curriculum implementation

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What do your mother and father do for a living?
4. How many brothers and sisters do you have?
5. Tell me the story of your life
 - a. Your hopes and wishes
 - b. Your experiences at school
 - i. Are there things that inspire you to come to school? If so, what are they? If not, why not. Describe your experiences with examples from your life.
 - ii. What interests you to learn?
 - iii. Do you have any support from your family members including your grandparents and siblings?
 - iv. Do you feel any difference between yourself and someone perhaps a friend who does not go to school?
 - c. Describe your life experiences outside school and at home (family, friends etc.)

After curriculum implementation

1. Describe your experiences with the curriculum.
2. What things interested and involved you?
3. What did not interest you and how can I make it better?

District Education Officer, principal, teachers, and religious leaders

1. What are your expectations, hopes, and wishes from girls?
2. Is the current educational system addressing the needs?
3. What have you done for addressing girls' access to education and enrollment in schools?

Parents and women in the farmlands

1. Tell me the story of your life
2. Tell me the story of your daughter's life
3. What are your expectations, hopes, and wishes from your daughter?